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LONDON SOCIETY.

A Monthly Magazine

OF

LIGHT AND AMUSING LITERATURE

FOR

THE HOURS OF RELAXATION.

VOL. LXI.

JANUARY TO JUNE, 1892.



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LONDON SOCIETY.

JANUARY 1892.

The Countess Pharamond.

(A SEQUEL TO "SHEBA.")

By "RITA,"

Author of "GRETCHEN," "THE LAIRD O' COCKPEN," "SHEBA," etc., etc.

CHAPTER I.

MADAME LA COMTESSE "RECEIVES."

BEHIND the gilded gates of the Hôtel Pharamond, in the Champs Elysées, the world of Paris was being entertained.

For some years the *hôtel* had been closed to society. Its owner had been travelling far and wide, visiting old world and new, intent on amusement and distraction.

Rumour whispered that even his great wealth had not been proof against the vicissitudes of the gaming-table or the extravagances of a certain "*lionne*," well known in theatrical circles—a queen of comedy, and a queen possessed of an ambition to shine in a very dazzling and eccentric fashion. To escape her thrall-dom, which threatened to overstep his patience and his resources, the Count Pharamond took himself off abruptly to safer, if less civilized, regions. This had all happened some years ago, and now Count Pharamond had returned to his beloved boulevards—returned enriched by a new fortune to which he had unexpectedly succeeded, and accompanied—to the no small curiosity of society—by a wife, whom he had met and married at the Antipodes.

These events had been duly circulated in fashionable journals, and discussed by the count's former acquaintances, previous to the advent of the Countess Pharamond herself.

To-night she was "receiving," for the first time, that select and critical circle to which her husband's rank admitted her—and with sinking heart, but unquailing courage, she stood by his side in the first of her brilliant suite of reception rooms, undergoing that most terrible ordeal a woman can undergo—the merciless criticism of her own sex.

The countess was a beautiful woman—of that there could be no doubt. Tall and finely formed, with every adjunct of toilet and art to enhance the advantages of youth and nature, she need not have feared any adverse verdict on her personal charms. She was very fair; her golden hair, the colour of ripe corn, gave warmth to her faultless skin; her eyes, of somewhat too cold a blue, were shaded by lashes judiciously darkened. Her full Junoesque figure was displayed according to the irrational decrees of fashion; that is to say, most of the costly satin that formed her gown trailed on the floor, and the upper portion of her body made up in diamonds for what it missed in material covering. The effect was no doubt pleasing to herself, and satisfactory to her husband, who had pronounced her toilette of a "*chic incomparable*." A critical and artistic mind might have objected to it; but fashion is a goddess more eccentric than artistic, and a woman who is dressed "just like other women" may be sure she is safe.

The scene was very brilliant, and the magnificent *salons* lent themselves as an admirable foreground to the beauty and jewels that filled them. People who had expected to meet other people met them, and were satisfied and complaisant in consequence; for, strangely enough, one's host and hostess are usually the last persons one is interested in or cares to see in any great social gathering.

The reasons for entertaining must afford a curious problem to thoughtful minds. Is it to spend a great deal of money on people who don't even mean "thank you" for your trouble? Is it to outshine others, or to display one's own possessions, or effect a temporary sensation, or get noticed in society journals, or rid oneself of superfluous wealth, or from a sense of pleasure, or duty?

I am inclined to think very little personal enjoyment is to be found in it, and very little recompense for the trouble and expense, and waste and extravagance it entails.

In the rush and hurry of modern life the art of entertaining has both suffered and deteriorated. France kept it longer and understood it better than any other nation ; but even the Parisian *salon* is not what it was before the Revolution, and with the decadence of the old *noblesse* one can also trace the decadence of that charming and brilliant society where wit and beauty and culture reigned supreme, and held their special courts, and were adored by their special courtiers.

Now we have wealth and bought titles—the vulgarity of trade successes—the evanescent triumph of beauty pushed into notoriety by a “personage,” and trumpeted loudly by society journals. We have crowded gatherings, where the mere fact of standing on a staircase represents enjoyment—huge crushes, where health, nerves and temper alike suffer, and whose martyrdom is duly atoned for by a line in a newspaper, where chance may kindly bracket American shoddyism beside an aristocratic title.

There is no doubt that society has struck a false note, but the vibration endures long, and the few trained and tutored ears are the only ears that really suffer. Where there are so many jarring discords, so much that is false and inharmonious, one ceases to criticize out of sheer disgust at the hopelessness of the task.

However, the miscellaneous crowd passing and re-passing through the magnificent *salons* of the Hôtel Pharamond seemed very well satisfied with their entertainment. Curiosity was rife about their hostess—the “Cornflower of Australia” some one had named her, and the *sobriquet* charmed the men and amused the women. In reality, she was not Australian at all, being of English birth and descent ; but as Count Pharamond had met her in Australia, Paris thought fit to dower her somewhat uncommon beauty with a corresponding origin. “He bears it well, *ce rôle de mari*, our dear Pharamond,” said the somewhat *passé* Duchesse de Valette to her friend and contemporary, Madame de Mauprât, as they sat side by side in one of the less crowded *salons*, criticizing and scandalizing their dearest friends in approved fashion.

“He does not look especially happy,” returned Blanche de Mauprât, who was a faded blonde of a somewhat sceptical and cynical temperament. “I wonder why he married her—he might have done so much better.”

“He did not need,” said the duchesse. “He has birth and

fortune. He always said he would please himself whenever he did marry."

"She is not '*vrai aristocrate*.' There is something crude, nervous, uncertain about her," answered Madame de Mauprât, signalling with her fan to a man who was lazily sauntering through the room. "Here is Léon Bérarde—let us ask his opinion about her."

"Who is that handsome man he is speaking to?" inquired the duchesse curiously. "I do not remember his face; he has the *air anglais*. Ah, Monsieur Bérarde," she added presently, "why did you not present your friend? He is a stranger to me. I do not remember seeing him before in Paris."

"He is only passing through on his way to Germany, madame," said Léon Bérarde, as he saluted Madame de Mauprât with graceful *empressement*. "He is an English earl—of great fortune. He has done me the honour to buy my picture, 'The Psyche,' exhibited at the last *Salon*."

"He is very handsome, but what a melancholy face," said the duchesse reflectively; "one would say something tragic had happened in his life. Bring him here, Léon. I should like to speak to him."

Monsieur Bérarde bowed, and left them to search for the Englishman, who had wandered on by himself—one of a crowd in whom he felt very little interest. When his French acquaintance found him he was just on the point of leaving, but Léon Bérarde persuaded him that the two ladies who desired his acquaintance were both charming and aristocratic, and he allowed himself to be conducted to their presence.

Already a little crowd was fluttering around the Duchesse de Valette, for she was a well-known personage and very popular in society, but one and all made way for the tall handsome Englishman with the grave face and sad deep eyes, on whom the capricious fancy of Madame de Valette had fallen for the moment.

He spoke French more carefully than fluently, but the duchesse could talk for a dozen people, and exerted herself to be specially brilliant and entertaining.

"As you have been so short a time in Paris," she said at last, "I presume you have not seen our hostess before to-night."

"I am ashamed to say that I have not seen her, even to-night,"

he answered. "Monsieur Bérarde dined with me and then insisted on my accompanying him here for an hour, but I had not the curiosity to ask the name of my hostess, nor have I yet discovered her."

The duchesse laughed. "That is so like an Englishman," she said. "I wonder what makes you so cold and indifferent. Would it be all the same had you found yourself in a *salon* of the Faubourg, or that of some *demi-monde* celebrity; at Monsieur Thiers', or Monsieur Zola's?"

"I am afraid," he said with that grave smile which had no mirth in it, "that it would not have concerned me very much in which of those places I had found myself. As it is, perhaps you will kindly take pity on my ignorance and enlighten me."

"Willingly," she said; "but first give me your arm and take me to the refreshment rooms, and on our way there I will give you the history of my friend, your unknown host, and of the Australian beauty he has married and brought to Paris to startle it with novelty as he has so often done before."

She had risen and taken the arm presented to her, but she suddenly felt it tremble, and looking up saw her companion's face had turned very pale. "I—I beg your pardon, madame," he stammered huskily; "but you said Australian, did you not?"

"But certainly, monsieur—the lady has come from there. My friend Count Pharamond——"

"Pharamond—Good God!" He dropped her arm; he seemed for a moment to forget her presence, or where he was.

The duchesse stared at him in veritable consternation.

"*Mais—qu'est-ce que c'est?* What have we then—what have I said?" she murmured in astonishment.

With a strong effort he recovered his composure. "A thousand pardons, madame," he said, "but your announcement came as a—as indeed a surprise. I—I knew a Count Pharamond in Australia. I myself have come from there but a year ago. Can it possibly be the same?"

"Sit down a moment, you are agitated and disturbed," said the duchesse with ready tact. She was really concerned at the pallor and agitation of this interesting stranger, and the sensation of a new *petite histoire*, or *chronique scandaleuse*, was sweet to her jaded tastes. "Later we will seek the refreshment rooms. Tell me—I am much interested—the Count Pharamond is a very old

friend of mine—you knew him in the colonies and you knew his wife also. Is it so?"

"I did not know his wife—personally . . . and my acquaintance with the count was very slight."

The duchesse noted the constraint in the voice, the sudden coldness and hauteur of the handsome face, but she did not see the lines of pain round the firm lips that the thick moustache concealed. She did not guess that every nerve and fibre of that strong frame was quivering with the agony of a suddenly awakened memory.

Her face clouded. It was disappointing to be able to learn nothing after all. She did not care what her new acquaintance knew of the Count Pharamond, but she did care very much for any information respecting his wife. "The countess is very beautiful," she said presently. She wondered whether this man was trying to baffle her; whether he might not have had some *tendresse* for this Australian Juno.

"Is she?" he answered vaguely and with an indifference that was too real to be assumed, though the duchesse chose to think it so. His thoughts had travelled far enough away, seeing only blue sky and burning sunlight, and the foliage of giant trees where the whirr of the locusts sounded, and the gold of fruit on the orange boughs, and the starry glow of the passion flower, and amidst all, and through a haze of something sadder than any tears there looked back to his one sad girl's face, with eyes whose innocent dreams were drowned in the sorrows of womanhood, and lips whose kisses were sealed for ever now by the silent touch of death.

And amidst the sudden darkness that swept over his senses, and made the rooms and the lights and the gay laughing throng as things that had no meaning, a voice reached his ear in the shrill penetrating French accent that seemed to probe like a knife his tired and overwrought brain.

"Ah, there! monsieur; that is she—our hostess—the new beauty—the Flower of Australia as they call her. Tell me what you think . . . perhaps you are mistaken—you did know her. Is it so?"

Stupidly, vaguely, he looked where she directed, and saw coming through the suite of rooms beyond, a woman all in gleaming white satin, and with the blaze and glitter of diamonds

on her white skin and the gold of her corn-coloured hair. He rose to his feet. By right of his grand stature and proportions he towered over the puny Frenchmen around. The eyes of the Countess Pharamond fell upon him, and rested lingeringly, doubtfully, as she advanced nearer and nearer. Was it a long or short time? He never knew. He never in any after hour could have told. But she was beside him, before him, her hand outstretched in a timid and hesitating greeting.

"It is so long since I have seen you," she said in his own tongue, "but I am sure I am not mistaken. I am sure I remember you in—Sydney. You are Paul Meredith?"

"I was—Paul Meredith, Madame Pharamond," he said, bowing low over the outstretched hands. "I am so no longer, only it seems as hard to believe it as—"

"As that I was ever Bessie Saxton," she answered. And it seemed that the history of a lifetime spoke to each in the swift glance of meeting eyes.

CHAPTER II.

BEFORE THE WORLD.

"AND so you are not Paul Meredith any longer?" said the Countess Pharamond later on that same evening.

The Earl of Amersley had been at last released from the somewhat *exigeante* demands of Madame de Valette, and his hostess had watched her opportunity and now detained him by her side in that solitude which a crowd can always command.

"No," he answered, speaking English as she had done. "The change of fortune was very sudden and unexpected. Death removed my two brothers and then my father. I returned to England only just in time to see him."

"And will you ever go back to Sydney?" she asked, sinking her voice to a lower and more sympathetic key.

She noted the spasm of pain that contracted his face. She knew nothing of his history, or of what had happened since that time when—to her—he had been only a singer and the hero of a romantic love story, in which the friend of her girlhood's days had played a part.

"No," he said in answer to her question; "I never wish to go there again."

"I wish," she said somewhat nervously, "you would tell me of . . . of Sheba Ormatroyd. I have so often wanted to know. I have heard nothing of her since . . . since my marriage."

His face grew white as death. "You . . . you don't know"—he said brokenly—"you never heard she . . . died?"

"Died," faltered Madame Pharamond, "out there in Australia? No, I never heard of it. Poor Sheba, what a strange life—and how short."

"We will not speak of her," said Paul abruptly. "It is very painful to me. Tell me rather of yourself. I little thought, when I accepted Bérarde's invitation to-night, that I should find myself in the house of an old acquaintance."

"The world is very small," said Madame Pharamond, with the air of one making an original observation; "and you and I ought to have been friends, even though we were not. But no doubt your wife often spoke of me. By-the-bye, how bitter her people were against you both. What a pity they did not know who you really were."

Lord Amersley winced at the observation. It showed a want of tact and delicacy. He made no answer, and his companion rattled on in a manner she considered entertaining, telling him of her life in Paris, her *château* where she had spent the autumn, her delight in the gay and brilliant city, and her determination to be a "success" in society.

"I am getting quite used to French ways and French people," she said, in somewhat the old boastful way that used to annoy Sheba Ormatroyd. "The married women here have far the best of it. I managed to pick up the language very quickly. My husband says I am very 'adaptable.' He was very tiresome at first. We used to quarrel dreadfully, but now we get on very well; as well as most married couples, at all events. Fortunately for me, I was never romantic like Sheba."

"That must be a decided advantage," said Lord Amersley gravely. "I believe French marriages are not, as a rule, based on anything so unstable as romance."

"No, they are always arranged by parents and relatives. I think it is a good plan; most of the marriages in England are so shamefully improvident; and, after all, in a few years' time they don't turn out any better than ours. If I ever have a daughter, I shall certainly bring her upon French principles. By the way,

I suppose you do not know I have a little son. He is staying with his grandmother at the *château*. She adores him. That is just as well. I hate children myself. I think they are an unmitigated nuisance."

The grave eyes of the Englishman looked down at her with something of contempt.

"I am sorry to hear any woman say that," he said. "I know we live in an age when maternity is considered an unpleasant obligation, instead of a sacred relationship; it is the fashion to say so, even if one does not think it."

"The *voix de la nature* does not speak to everybody," said Madame Pharamond, with a shrug of her graceful shoulders. "It certainly has had nothing to say to me—or to Pharamond either, for that matter. He was pleased to have an heir—when one has property, of course it is better—but really, I think the old countess was the person most interested in the affair. By the way, do you know my husband?"

"I have not that honour," he answered stiffly, with a vivid remembrance of certain incidents in the count's life in the colonies that were not exactly to his credit.

"Oh! I must introduce you, then," she said, looking round the room.

"Pray do not trouble," said Lord Amersley hastily. "I am just about to leave."

"But you are staying in Paris? you will call again?" she entreated eagerly.

"I should be delighted, only I leave to-morrow for Germany; I am only passing through Paris."

"I am sorry to hear that," said the countess with real regret. She had looked forward to seeing a great deal more of this handsome and distinguished man. "Must you go to-morrow?" she added persuasively. "Could you not put off the journey for a day, and come and dine with us? We have a box at the Odéon for the evening. Let me offer you a seat."

He shook his head. "You are very good, countess; but I cannot remain in Paris. An old friend of mine is at Heidelberg—ill, and I have promised to go to him. It has been an unexpected pleasure, this meeting. But no doubt I shall see you again, here or in London. Do you ever go to London?"

"We are going for a couple of months this season," she

answered. He saw her face flush; her manner grew nervous and constrained. He wondered what was the reason. Following her glance, he saw that it had travelled to the further end of the *salon*, where her husband was standing talking to a group of women.

It struck him, as he noted the dark coarse face and coldly gleaming eyes of Pharamond, that there was something threatening in his aspect, and that his wife was afraid of him. The look soon passed away. The countess had learnt the lessons of the world well enough to master her face and feelings. But none knew better than herself how little need the veriest beggar in the street had to envy her, for all her wealth and beauty, or the position in society that was her portion.

She hated her husband, but she feared him even more than she hated him. Ostensibly the mistress of his splendid homes, she knew that his flagrant infidelities, his coarse sneers, his dis honouring suspicions of herself, had made life a burden to her.

The look that had flashed across the room but a moment before told her in plain language that her long and earnest conversation with her handsome guest had not been unnoticed, and would probably be the signal for a domestic storm when she and Pharamond were alone. Yet, with something of the bravado and devilry that shared largely in the innate coquetry of her disposition, she did not affect less interest in the conversation and companionship of Lord Amersley. Rather did she endeavour to keep him by her side a little longer, talking with eagerness and animation—flashing smiles and glances at the grave and somewhat pre-occupied face. He did not like her, or her manner. Indifferent as most women were to him, she had the power of raising something of irritation and impatience from those cold ashes of indifference. She was a beautiful woman—and, in a way, a clever one—but in the mind of Amersley, as in the mind of Paul Meredith, there rankled the sting of past memories, and her association with those memories made her every word and gesture distasteful.

He longed to get away from this glow of light and jewels—from the scents of the hot-house flowers, perishing in the gas-heated atmosphere—from the babble of tongues and laughter and compliments, that bore—for him—so patent a stamp of insincerity.

"I never was fit for society," he thought. "But now—now I

loathe it!" And all the scene grew dim before his eyes, and the sudden ache of a memory never stifled woke again in his heart. What were the empty honours, the vast rent-roll, the homage of the world to him now? Nothing—and less than nothing, he told himself in the bitterness of a sorrow that made death seem enviable.

Would he not have given each and all of these only for the free wild life of the bush—the sound of one voice, with its glad welcome—the sight of eyes dark with love and tender with passion that once had hidden their tell-tale adoration on his breast? Ay, that he would—a thousand and a thousand fold!

One life—one little human life—to centre all that means the world!

Truly, love is the cruellest and the most unwise dream that ever made the sport of gods, the laughter of men, and—perhaps the tears of angels.

He thought this even as he listened to the Countess Pharamond's banal chatter—answering at random here and there when she paused for comment, or question. But he was thankful when he at last succeeded in getting away—thankful to be alone in the quiet streets, and under the quiet stars. Alone, with his own pain and his own sorrow; that sorrow which remorse had sharpened into undying regret, whose veiled face bore the impress of a sin that tears of blood could never wash away.

"Ah, God! How lightly we sin in youth; how vainly we repent in manhood," he thought in his heart.

The old passion welled up keen and fresh as of yesterday, the love for a woman—wooed—won—betrayed—murdered—so he cried in self-accusation—in that brief bygone youth that had only known for itself one short happy year.

His restless feverish steps had taken him somewhat out of his route. He found himself on one of the many bridges of the Seine; the dull water flowing silently at his feet; above, the million gleaming points of starlight. He gazed into those dark and silent depths, and one long shuddering sigh escaped his lips.

Would death give her back to him? Was there—as poets sang and fabled, and priests vaguely taught—some fair and unknown land where soul might be once more in touch with soul, and love, consecrated and purified in fires of suffering, might sigh itself to rest in satisfied content?

And again and again, as in old days of darkness and trouble and perplexity, the strong man's soul was rent within him, and the cry, vain as all earth's sorrowful cries must ever seem, rang wildly out in the silence: "Oh, for certainty! For conviction! For truth!"

But the stars shone on. The water flowed. The soft hush and peace of night held all the dusky city in its thrall. Other answer there was none. Other answer there never would be—so it seemed to him!

CHAPTER III.

CONJUGAL BLISS.

THE COUNTESS PHARAMOND was sitting alone in her luxurious dressing-room gazing into the fire. Her maid had removed her ball dress and jewels. She was wrapped in a soft gown of white cashmere and lace; her corn-coloured hair, not being long or luxuriant enough for the usual "heroine-like" fashion described in novels as "flowing to her feet," was carelessly knotted at the back of her head. She held a novel in her hand, but she was not reading it. Her eyes had a somewhat strained and anxious look, as they turned ever and again to the door which separated her apartments from those of her husband.

It opened at last, and he came in—a cigar between his teeth—his eyes dull and gloomy—his coarse figure and slouching gait looking decidedly out of place amidst the satin and lace draperies, and dainty upholstery that made the room so essentially feminine.

His glance fell on the figure lying back so gracefully on the *chaise longue*. That at least was no blur amidst the delicate and costly surroundings, and though he did not love, and never had loved, his wife, he felt a thrill of sultanic pride in his ownership as he met the somewhat timid glance of her blue eyes.

He ruled her despotically and she feared him. Of that last fact he was sure, and he deemed it the best mode of managing a woman, thereby showing how little he knew them. Tyranny only leads to deception, and deception to infidelity, but Pharamond had long ago made up his mind that his wife should give him no trouble in *that* line.

She hated him to smoke in her room, but to-night she made no remark on the offence. She was somewhat anxious to know if her *début* in Parisian society, as his wife, had been satisfactory,

and she awaited his first remark with much greater dread than he was aware of.

He stood before her ; his bold and critical eyes wandered over her figure with that insolent and possessive glance that she so hated.

" You did very well," he said at last, removing his cigar and puffing a cloud of smoke up to the painted ceiling ; " you were a novelty. Paris loves novelty. You are not at all a *grande dame*, but you are *chic*. Perhaps that is better. I am glad you have altered your hair. The deep colour suits your skin. You did not rouge ?—No. Célestine says you will not need to do that for a year or two—she is artist enough to know. You may safely leave yourself in her hands."

The hot colour flushed his wife's face. Her lips curled. " I am glad," she said coldly, " that you were satisfied. Célestine certainly ought to know your tastes."

He laughed. It always pleased him when he angered her. " Yes," he said coolly, " I think she does. But do not be jealous, my dear ; that is an affair of the past."

" I should scarcely be jealous of my waiting-maid," she answered with indifference—" or of the Duchesse de Valette either," she added as an after-thought.

" Ah, poor Hélène," he murmured with affected sympathy. " And once we called her '*la belle Hélène*.' She was the beauty of Paris. By the way, who was your English friend ? I seemed to know his face."

She had been expecting that question and was prepared for it.

" The Englishman whom Bérarde brought," she said. " I thought you would remember him. He is now the Earl of Amersley. He was Paul Meredith, the opera singer, who was in Sydney."

Pharamond took his cigar from his lips and stared at her in undisguised astonishment. " Paul Meredith," he muttered. " He—an English earl!"

" We always thought there was a mystery about him," said his wife languidly. " He told me his two brothers died suddenly. His father was very old, and the shock killed him. Paul succeeded to the title and estates. He must be enormously rich."

" And where is his wife ?" asked Pharamond abruptly.

" Dead—she died out there. He gave no particulars. I think he was really in love with her. I must say I never could understand what any man could find attractive in Sheba Ormatroyd.

She certainly was not pretty ; she had the most brusque, disagreeable manners, and the most complete want of tact. She was clever, certainly, but I thought men did not care about clever women."

That cold evil look she had learned to dread crept like a dark shadow over Pharamond's face. "Pretty," he said slowly. "No, she was not—pretty. I suppose one would have called you *that*. But she was beautiful ; she would have been a grand woman, a woman a man might have been proud to love, prouder still to win."

"Oh, I know you had a romantic fancy for her yourself," sneered the countess. "And I suppose her memory wears a sort of halo for you, because she was just the one woman who would have nothing to say to you. Your adoration and attentions were certainly thrown away on her."

A frown darkened his brow. "She knew the value of womanhood," he said, "and how to command a man's esteem. In that respect she did not resemble most of her sex."

The countess coloured to the roots of her soft, fair hair. "Perhaps she was not tempted," she said hotly. "It is scarcely fair, Maxime, to reproach me with the weakness that you always profess to admire as the greatest of feminine charms."

"I am not reproaching," he said. "I suppose I ought to consider myself the gainer."

Then he laughed brutally. "All the same, one knows that a woman won as you were won, *ma chère*, is not of the type whom one trusts very far, or respects very highly. But, as I have before warned you, I am not of the *complaisant* French husband order. If I have risked my honour in placing it in your hands, I shall know how to preserve, or avenge it."

She shivered as she sat there in the warm firelight, and her face grew very pale. Again and again had that rod been held over her. Again and again had she been forced to feel that her girlhood's error made the penance of her womanhood.

The man who had been trapped into marrying her, seldom lost an opportunity of bringing that fact to her recollection. He himself scoffed at the moral obligations of marriage as far as they concerned men, but he rigorously upheld them to the woman who bore his name, and was the mother of his heir.

"You might be generous enough to spare me these constant suspicions, Maxime," she said at last. "At least my conduct

shows blamelessly enough before the history and morals of your friend, the Duchesse de Valette."

He made a gesture of contempt. "She," he said, "is not my wife. Whatever other women are, whatever I am myself, I do not choose that the breath of scandal shall touch the Countess Pharamond."

She was silent. A sigh of fatigue escaped her. Her eyes beneath their drooping lids were somewhat dim and sad. But Bessie Saxton had not been of the type of woman who shed tears easily. The Countess Pharamond was still less so.

The count noted the signs of fatigue and tossed his burnt-out cigar into the flames. "I suppose you are tired and want to rest," he said. "You must not lessen the impression you have made when you appear in the Bois to-morrow. Well, good-night, *mon amie. Bien dormez !*"

He brushed her cheek with his lips lightly and carelessly, and then sauntered off. At the door he paused a moment and looked back.

"I have one thing to say," he said slowly. "I do not like your English friend. Nor do I desire his further acquaintance. I leave you to convey to him that fact."

Then, still with that cold smile on his lips, he went away, leaving her to solitude and her own thoughts.

* * * * *

Tired and wearied as she was the Countess Pharamond sat there for long after her husband had left, going over and over again in her own mind the scenes and memories so vividly recalled to-night.

Her ambitions had been satisfied, the desires of her youth and girlhood accomplished and fulfilled beyond her utmost expectations. She had wealth and honours, and social success and beauty ; she was still young and had still the capacity of enjoyment. Could she not be happy? Had not fortune been kind to her?

She wondered at the dull hopeless feeling that alone usurped her heart to-night.

In what respect had womanhood altered her? Why should she now feel that even gratified ambition and granted wishes were as unstable and as unsatisfactory as the vague dreams of youth, that had glorified their possible attainment?

She could not answer the question. She thought almost regretfully of her girlhood's friend, of the strange, restless, searching soul that had at last found rest. "She at least kept the love she believed in," she thought. "How she worshipped that man. I wonder if he remembers her now . . . Poor Sheba."

She sighed, and rose from her chair at last, catching sight, as she did so, of her own reflection in the glass beyond.

"I was only a mere pretty girl," she thought, "when I won what I had determined to win. I am a woman now—a handsome woman—if the world's verdict means anything. I wonder what woke up in me to-night? I am afraid, myself, of the hate I feel for Pharamond. If I dared—revenge——"

The thought coiled asp-like about her heart, stinging to fierce and living pain the bitter and humiliated feelings that rankled there.

"It would be easy enough," she thought. "But after all a vengeance that recoils on oneself is a very useless thing, and I think, sometimes, he is evil enough for even murder. Why did he say that about Amersley? Is he jealous of him? Can it be possible that he still remembers that girl and looks on Paul as his rival? Paul—" She smiled softly as she threw off the cashmere and lace from her beautiful figure. "I never envied Sheba anything, but I do envy her that one man's love . . . I think I would give a great deal to know if he still—remembers."

Then she left the dressing-room for the adjoining bed-chamber, and tried to find in sleep the only peace that ever came to her now.

Perhaps she was less heartless than she had imagined. Perhaps the new ties of wifehood and maternity had roused in her nature the consciousness of some want denied, some tenderness forfeited.

Society has settled most things to its satisfaction, but even society has not been clever enough to kill out all human feeling in human nature.

The Countess Pharamond had ever ridiculed the possibility of affection interfering with worldly advantages. Perhaps she had yet to acknowledge that error, and reap its fruits. Her temperament was naturally cold and selfish, and in the hands of the man she had married it was deteriorating daily. Fear made her a coward. Dislike made her a hypocrite. The tyranny that enforces obedience in a woman is a weapon whose danger she

can generally manage to evade, and with all the strength of her nature the wife of Pharamond had grown to hate the brutal tyrant who posed to the world as an admirable husband; who left her in her youth and beauty to console himself with viler charms, and more equivocal society.

But in the brief years of marriage she had never hated him as she did to-night. For to-night she felt that consolation might be possible—sympathy might be won—and that even her own shame and regret might bear less poignant a sting if the grave sad eyes of Paul Meredith would only from time to time look back at her own, or she might feel that in his strong manhood there lived the promise and possibility of a friendship as strong and noble.

Tired and fevered, and impatient, so she lay for long wakeful hours, forgetful of her recent triumph, forgetful of the place she had won and must fill now in the ranks of that world whose notice she had once so eagerly coveted.

With the noon of the already risen day she would have to rise and smile, and play her part again ; but in the solitude and darkness of the grey dawn her wide and sleepless eyes saw only the ghosts of the past stealing shadow-like through the mists of memory—saw only a tired and miserable and discontented woman, whom the world envied as the Countess Pharamond.

CHAPTER IV.

OLD FRIENDS AND OLD SORROWS.

"I AM getting old," said Franz Müller, taking his pipe from his lips and looking at it regretfully. "I no longer enjoy my smoke. I feel pains and fatigue instead of throwing them off. I do not so much love solitude. I grow impatient with the students who disagree with me, and the professors who have stagnated here in the old University until they seem as stony and immovable as itself. I find my bed hard, and my food indigestible. The laughter and anecdotes, the fights and frolics of the students seem but the folly of witless fools. And once I thought it an ideal life ! "

His glance wandered round his room, a very simply-furnished room in the Langestrasse at Heidelberg, and in so wandering found itself suddenly arrested by another glance that met it, a

glance that looked out from a rough tangled mass of grey hair. It was only the reflection of his own face given back from one of those delectable German mirrors, which would shame the loveliest complexion and distort the most perfect features.

Müller recognized himself, and a faint smile came to his lips.

"So," he said half aloud, "so, my friend, we are growing old, you and I. All our wisdom and all our philosophy will not alter that fact. Well, life has never been too kind to us, nor friends too many, nor love too sweet. We can afford to part with it less regretfully than most folk. Will its problems vex no more? or are they to pursue us like an unsolved equation on the next journey? Who shall say? . . . ay, who shall say?"

The shadows were deepening in the quiet room, the smoke of the big pipe curled like a faint grey cloud to the white ceiling. The old man leaned back in his chair, and let his mind wander to the past. It had been eventful enough, but it had only left behind a longing for rest and peace; that weariness of mind and body which sooner or later overtakes humanity, lessening its desires almost to the limits of childhood. A little food, a little sleep, a little peace, that made up the sum of desire now. Then one day the sleep would be a little longer, the peace a little deeper, and—well, that would be all, so far as the world need concern itself. He would not be remembered long. He had done nothing very great or wonderful. His music had never been popular, his writings were too abstruse or too speculative to please the general taste. He sighed as he thought of all his studies in philosophy and science. What did they represent? Misleading theories, contradictory speculations. He himself was as little satisfied as those he had instructed. Did not all the most puzzling questions of life resolve themselves into the one answer—death; and beyond that what was sure? what could the mind grasp and the soul seize with absolute certainty?

From time to time a wave of spiritual enlightenment had passed over the world, but it was very little better for the teaching of saints, or the death of martyrs. The so-called virtues of civilization had degenerated into vices, from which the untutored savage, obeying simply the laws of nature and his own instincts, would shrink in disgust. Men were not less criminal, sectarians not less hypocritical, scientists not less bigoted, the world not less immoral than they had all been in the early days of the Founder

of Christianity. If a tree is to be judged by its fruits, a religion by its results, truly there was not much to boast of since that Founder had left to the world the legacy of his teachings, and example.

Müller had always been bitter against creeds, and the professors of creeds; but now, with the weariness of a useless antagonism, he acknowledged that without some sort of faith, some definite hope, something to cling to and uphold, the world might have been even worse than it was. You cannot individualize, you cannot even reach the great mass of humanity, and so teach, and so lead, and so guide it, that all minds become as one.

Sooner or later the greatest enthusiasm grows weary with the hopelessness of such a task. Periods of darkness are surrounded by periods of light, but the darkness rolls back. The feeble burst of spirituality gives place again to gross materialism; the hope of success fades away; and prejudice and ignorance again usurp the place which had seemed to yield to the sway of Wisdom, and the promise of Truth.

Somewhat in this vein had his reflections run when a knock at the door roused him.

The German handmaid appeared with lights, and the information that a gentleman wished to see him. Imagining it was one of the professors or students who often looked in to spend an hour with him in the evenings, Müller bade her show the gentleman in. But when his eyes fell on the tall figure and well-cut clothes he started up from his chair.

"*Gott in Himmel!* Paul—you! Ah, my friend, this is good, indeed. But how came you here? What brought you? Sit down; sit down. We'll have some Niersteiner and a good talk. It is long—ah! too long since we met."

"I come direct from Paris," said Paul, smiling at the old man's enthusiasm. "You said you were ill, Müller, and I thought you were probably neglecting yourself—feeding your mind and forgetting your body, as you have a trick of doing. I am an idle man, you know. I thought a run over here would not harm me, and—well, here I am."

He stood there, so tall and strong, with the old man's hands clasped in his own, looking down with grave and kindly eyes at the familiar face of his old friend.

He noted the change that illness and age had wrought; and it hurt him to see it. His was not the nature that makes many friends, but rather of the kind that clings most faithfully to one or two in the passage through life. Müller's eyes grew somewhat dim, but as emotion was not compatible with philosophy, he dropped Paul's hands, and bustled about the room, producing a long-necked flask of Rhine wine and some glasses from an adjacent cupboard, and setting them on the table near the window, while all the time he talked and jested to Paul in the old dry, humorous way.

"Ill—yes, I have been ill; but what would you, then? Seventy years is a burden one is bound to feel even in an age of sanitation. But in *that* the Fatherland does not excel. They give one good beer here, Paul, but pay not much attention to water and drains. I am not what you call—acclimatized, so I had the fever. It has left me weak—that is all—and I discover that I am old, Paul—really old; the frame and the mind, and the heart and the brain, getting a little tired of the harness. *Ach!* my friend, but it is good to see you again. Sit down, now; sit down, and we will drink the good Niersteiner. He harms no one—he is my best doctor."

"You really look ill, Müller," said Paul, with concern; "I am afraid you don't take care of yourself."

He drew his chair up to the table, and watched the old man as he poured the choice yellow wine into the glasses, and raised his own to his lips with the familiar "*Hoch*."

"And now, what news—what has happened since I left you in your great English *Schloss*?" asked the old German presently. "Have you got used to the life?"

"I am afraid I never shall," said the young earl sadly. "If you only knew, Müller, how pleasant it is to hear the old familiar 'Paul' without any ceremonious prefix! I fear I am not one who takes kindly to grandeur. I have serious thoughts of shutting up Amersley, and bringing the boy over here and educating him in Germany."

"I should not advise it," said Müller thoughtfully. "An English nobleman had best have an English education."

"I detest public schools—they are a hotbed of iniquity," exclaimed Paul.

"*Ach, mein Freund,*" said old Müller, shaking his grey head in

meek reproof, "you and I know well enough that vice is, and always has been, and that all young manhood must wade through the mire of tempting and example before it can leave the mud behind, and stand in the clear stream that is the mirror of experience. What you learnt, your son will also learn. You may guard him—protect him as you will—but ignorance is not innocence, and abstinence is not purity. To every heart—to every life—comes the hour of temptation—the trial by which it shall rise or fall. Who should know that better, Paul, than you and I?"

Their eyes met with the comprehension of an unforgotten memory, and over each face stole the sadness and regret that that memory brought.

"Tell me," said the old man earnestly, but sinking his voice to a lower key, "tell me, Paul, has *she* followed you home as she threatened?"

"No," he said with a shudder. "I told her no threats—no law—no power on earth would ever induce me to take her back. She knows I am determined. She has been wise enough to remain in Australia. She has ample reasons. She may do what she likes with her life, but never again shall it have share or place in mine."

Müller's face grew graver. "I have often wished to tell you," he said with hesitation. "But I did not quite like. She was very good to your poor Sheba. She nursed her through all that terrible time. I think—in a way she was sorry for her."

Paul's face grew white as death. "How did they meet?" he said. "You never told me, Müller."

"No. The tragedy was sad enough without details. She--she happened to be in the neighbourhood. There was a storm. She sheltered with us, and Sheba was taken ill. We had no women folk, as you know, so she stayed there and nursed her."

"My God—it seems horrible!" groaned Paul, covering his face with his hands. "My poor girl!—she did not know, Müller? Surely she was spared *that* shame?"

"I think she did not know," said the old man cautiously. "Of course, I could never be quite sure. They were together when I came home that evening—and Sheba was never again fully conscious. The doctor seemed to think she never would have recovered her reason."

"But that looks as if she must have had some shock," said Paul anxiously. "You told me she was in fairly good health; and she was young and strong. I—I never had any dread for her."

"No—nor I either. But what could we know about women—you and I, Paul? What does any man know about them before he learns to care for one, and then—it is so often too late."

"It was 'too late' in my case," said Paul drearily. "How often do I feel that I never ought to have left her. She had the first and greatest claim on me. And now that burden of regret will go with me all my life—all my life!"

"It seems poor consolation to say so—but do you not think, Paul, it would have been very hard for her had she lived? Your position is changed. You could not have lived with her openly in the face of the world as . . . as you were doing. Our own codes of morality are all very well, Paul; but we cannot set the laws of society at defiance for all that. Your position had—nay, has—obligations that you must fulfil. I think no one would have been quicker to recognize that than Sheba herself——"

A look of anger and impatience came into the young man's face. "One may talk and talk," he said, "but one cannot kill feeling. Do you suppose anything you tell me is new to me? Have I not said it to myself over and over again? But what is the use? This one passion dominates my whole life with its undying memories. Waking or sleeping I know no forgetfulness. I tell you I envy my poor girl in her watery grave. I would have followed her gladly enough if it had not been for just the child."

"It would have been useless, Paul—useless. However little we desire life, we are bound to endure its burdens—we cannot cut ourselves off from *ourselves* — if we but rationally consider the matter. Life is the result of something capable of producing life, and giving it visible presence on earth; but though that *visible* presence ceases to exist, the power which caused it does not. The natural seed of the plant sinks into the ground —decays, rots, and seems to perish. We know that that seeming death is but productive of a new life. How, then, can we be so foolish as to imagine that with our own will we can cease *to be*—any more than that by our own will we came into existence?"

Suicide is but a madness—the suspension of reason under the strain of severe mental trouble, or temporary despair. But for aught men know they carry that trouble and despair with them on to another plane. Because for us they cease to exist, does not authorize us to say they do so for themselves."

"Ah, Müller," said the young man, raising his heavy eyes to the kindly face, "if in all your philosophies I could find one grain of comfort, or obtain an hour's forgetfulness, believe me they would know no more enthusiastic student. But they rather add to despair than alleviate it."

"I thank Fate," said Müller quaintly, "that I delivered my heart into no woman's keeping. If my loss has been great according to you, Paul, so also has been my gain. Human love is but a snare for the reason and a lasting sorrow to the soul. A little hour of bliss that promises everything—a long, long night of darkness that knows each promise broken and each hope unfulfilled. We seek to draw happiness to ourselves. We find it a myth—a dream without substance. Then to our disappointed eyes life shows but emptiness—blackness—despair."

"You give me scant comfort, Müller," said Paul drearily. "I am to live on because life exchanged for death means but the vengeance of Death on Life. I am to expect nothing, hope nothing, gain nothing, and yet be content with the fate that has bestowed these undesired gifts on me. Truly the prospect is cheering."

"Life has only one good gift, Paul," said the old man. "It is Hope. Not a narrow hope, an individual hope, but a wide-spread universal hope in the Wisdom that has created and the Destiny that must fulfil. We must not narrow our feelings into a selfish groove, nor dream that the universe at large was created for individual benefit. So long as we do so we must expect disappointment. The animal nature of man craves for love, joy, content, for itself alone; the Divine element in him—that spark of the inherited Godhead which, alas! is so often hidden under the dark cloak of earthly selfishness—that alone is content to live for others, and in their gain forget its own loss."

His voice and face had grown very grave. His eyes were bent on the sad face of the one friend for whom he had ever really cared in the true sense of friendship.

"I cannot comfort you, Paul," he said gently ; "I feel that—but all the same my sympathy is yours, as it always has been. For the rest, there is no physician whose cures are so sure as—Time."

CHAPTER V.

IN HEIDELBERG.

MÜLLER'S faith in Time as a physician might have been large, but Paul could not share it. It seemed to him as if the very springs of his life were broken ; as if never again could he know content, peace, forgetfulness.

The very accession to fortune, the sudden exemption from all anxiety, so far as material matters were concerned, only left his nature at the mercy of his feelings, and denied him the anodyne which work and occupation might have granted. Remorse gnawed at his very heart-strings. It seemed to him that the life he had ruined, the gifts he had destroyed, the genius that for his sake had flung itself into the arms of everlasting silence, would always face him with their unuttered reproach.

From the hour he had left Sheba Ormatroyd, the hour of that terrible parting, no word or sign had come to him, till Müller, in all kindness and gentleness, had broken the news of her death.

The full shock and horror of it only reached him by degrees ; reached him in interludes of reason, when his numbed brain and tortured mind had struggled back to the consciousness of life, and the importance of new duties and obligations. Two years had passed since he had left her, years that had left their mark on him as no other years of his eventful and troubled life had left it.

A man does not show his wounds to the world, but they bleed inwardly for all that, and dry eyes and smiling lips are only too often the mask of tortures that no one suspects ; from which men would shrink with horror if they could only read below the surface.

Paul's nature had never been a light one, and his love for Sheba Ormatroyd had called up in it all that was deepest, purest, best. No doubt human laws are very wise and very just ; no doubt to legislate and uphold morality is the bounden duty of

society ; but how can any laws implant the *feeling* for the morality they would enforce? It is a somewhat strange fact that that feeling in its purest and highest sense will often only awake at the bidding of circumstances which are directly opposed to external morality, which cannot accede to its laws, or be ruled by its decisions.

True, such cases may be exceptional, and one could scarcely expect them to be viewed as the basis of any law which desires to protect the weak and punish the vicious ; but because they *are* exceptional, and because when they do exist they rather tend to elevate than degrade the human race, to foster nobler feelings in men and women than the barter of the marriage market, or the fierce frenzy of a brief passion, ought they to be scoffed at and condemned?

Paul Meredith had been bound by legal and moral obligations to a vicious and abandoned woman. With the riper judgment of manhood, when passion is ruled by sense, and love bears with it those diviner elements of unselfishness, patience, forbearance—when it can reverence as well as adore, and recognize what is highest in itself as well as in the object of its worship, he had loved with that one true and lasting love that never comes twice to any human life.

That love bound him as never law or force of men's opinions could have done. Bound him not only for the life that had given itself to him, but for all his own life also. While his heart beat, while his memory lived, while thought and sense could sway his soul with passionate remembrance, then every such beat of heart, such thrill of memory, such passion of remembrance meant for him only the love of one woman, the unbroken and unbreakable fidelity he had sworn to her.

If she was not here beside him in the visible universe, yet none the less was she his in every memory of the beautiful spirit, the tender womanhood, that had so freely and frankly given themselves to him in all their pure and gracious youth.

It seemed to him that no sin could have been deeper, no insult greater, than even for one hour to give her place to another woman, or to seek forgetfulness in the sorceries and temptings that beguile men's senses, though they disgust their wiser moments. Voluntarily he chose for himself the deepest loneliness that man could seek : the loneliness that is before and in the world, but in

reality utterly and entirely apart from it. He hated his life and its obligations ; he hated the false smiles and honeyed words with which women wooed him, the proffered follies and excitements that made up the life of men of the world. A great duty, however hard, he would have accepted. A great sacrifice, however painful, he would have made ; but the obligations that bound him to society irritated him beyond endurance, and disgusted him as only heartlessness, vanity and insincerity can disgust man's higher nature.

Perhaps in no time since the shock and sense of his great trouble had fallen upon him, had he known such peaceful and almost untroubled hours as in that first week he spent at Heidelberg. He and Müller spent most of their time roaming about the old *Schloss* and its beautiful grounds.

The sweet spring weather was wooing leaf and flower. The dull red walls and picturesque ruins were framed in by new tints of vivid green ; the river sparkled and foamed over its rocky bed below, catching every gleam of sunshine and every passing shadow. Müller and Paul would sit under the trees or on some broken rock of the ruins, reading or talking in the old cynical speculative fashion, till the sun went westering down the hill, and the bright Neckar water would darken under its foam, and then they would saunter back through the quaint old town and have supper together in one of the least fashionable hotels, where there was less chance of noisy students dropping in to arrange for the challenging of a rival corps, or discuss some impending duel.

Occasionally Müller would invite some learned doctor or professor to join their simple suppers, and then Paul would listen and say little, sometimes interested, sometimes wearied over the long discussion of other men's thoughts, the endless controversies to which each new theory gave rise, and the apparently little advantage that had been, or ever would be, gained from all these profound philosophies and speculations.

But the life pleased him as no phase of life in these past two years had done, and the smart of his wound grew less keen, though he knew the wound itself would never cease to throb with the pain of memories and the passion of regret.

He saw with sorrow that Müller was really beginning to feel and show the infirmities of age. His intellect was still keen and vigorous, but he soon grew weary of discussions ; his eye had lost

its brightness, his frame its strength and vitality. He was less intolerant of opinion, and less dogmatic in argument. It pleased him more to smoke his big pipe and listen to others, than to assert himself.

Perhaps the warning that age brings, made him thoughtful. Before long there would be no need to speculate about that misty and unknown future. The veil would be lifted and he would learn its secrets for himself.

And unknown to every one, even to Paul, there lived in his heart a terrible remorse for the fate of Sheba Ormatroyd. That tragic death of hers had done more to age him than any one suspected. He never could quite forgive himself, never feel sure that he had not in some way undermined those habitual instincts which tend to keep women pure, even against greater temptations than she had known.

Foolish and irrational as their faiths may be, if those faiths have a natural hold on their instincts they also lend them strength. He had uprooted all such faiths from the garden of a young girl's mind, left her with no foothold for trust—no purpose for prayer —no hope in the dark afterwards that closes on life as surely as night on day.

He had never cared for any feminine thing as he had learnt to care for Sheba. He had been quick to recognize her gifts of mind, and appreciate her faithful and passionate nature. Yet no gifts, and no strength, and no fidelity had saved her from the common fate of womanhood.

They will not save any woman if she once lets love rule her life.

Müller had always dimly recognized that fact, and rather pitied its truth than blamed its folly. Had he been true to the creeds of his own philosophies, he might have asked himself whether he had any right to blame one sex for possessing instincts denied to the other. Those instincts were so universal that they seemed to imply some common gift of inheritance. Where is the woman who does not love best the man who has caused her the greatest amount of suffering ?

If sorrow brings forth the poet's sweetest song, so surely does pain bring forth a woman's deepest feelings. Why, we can not explain ; but if history and research and observation teach anything, then assuredly they teach that truth.

Are not the greatest loves on record, also the most unfortunate ?

What history does happiness leave that lingers in men's memories half so long as some record of sorrow and misfortune and ill-fate? It is a strange fact, but a true one, that though all humanity rebels against suffering, it is through suffering only that its best lessons are learnt, its deepest feelings touched, its grandest heroisms achieved. In youth we long for happiness, the enjoyment of the day and the hour. With maturer years we learn that there are deeper depths in our natures than material enjoyment can satisfy: sorrows sweeter than happiness, trials dearer than success, love the lovelier for the halo of undying sadness that crowns its brows.

But to reach such truths means the traversing of many a weary road, the disillusion of many a blissful dream, the torture of many doubts, the scorch of many tears, the heartaches of many days and nights.

And then when reached are they worth so very much after all?

Only if the discipline of one life is to pave the way to the higher and purer gain of another; if the seeming barren desert may yet bloom with the flowers of unselfishness, and the blossoms of patience and tenderness and truth.

No life is complete without love, because love alone can teach it its highest gain and its deepest loss. But the purest and greatest love is only that which knows self-forgetfulness, and while living for another's happiness finds therein its own.

The law of love owns no deep philosophy, no subtle mysticism, and needs no arbitrator for its fate, because, to it, that fate is an ordained and unalterable decree.

When it comes as the dawn of divinity, the soul yields and the heart acknowledges its reality. But to explain its presence, or analyze its reasons, or argue its effects is as impossible as to dissect the dew, or paint the rainbow, or fetter the winds of heaven.

Well has the poet said of man:

"Out of earth's elements mingled with flame,
Out of life's compound of glory and shame,
Fashioned and shaped by no will of our own,
Helplessly into life's history thrown;
Born to conditions we could not foresee,
Born by a law which compels us to be,
Born by one law, through all nature the same,
What makes us differ, and who is to blame?"

Ay, who is to blame? Through innumerable ages that cry has arisen from tortured hearts, from seeking souls. But in the void and silence from whence man issued, the answer still lies hidden. Blind instruments of an incomprehensible fate, so we live and move, and suffer and die, knowing as little of our end as we know of our beginning, asking even in the veriest bigotry of an apparently satisfied faith, "Am I quite sure—quite safe—quite satisfied?"

Let who will answer to his fellow man. Will any be brave enough, or honest enough, to answer to his own *very self* the one question which makes of that self at once a judge and an avenger?

(*To be continued.*)

At the Wells.

By FANNY L. GREEN.

THE fame of "The Wells," unlike that of its rival, "The Bath," does not date from pre-historic times, but the vogue of its healing springs was early strengthened by royal favour.

When the gay and kitten-like queen of Charles II. came with the court to drink the waters Lord North is fabled to have discovered two reigns before, "The Wells," as the courtier, de Grammont, tells us, were thought the most rural and simple, and, at the same time, the most entertaining of all the watering-places of Europe. They were the general rendezvous of "all the gay and handsome of both sexes," and the company, though numerous, was always select.

Since the modern town was only in course of growing up, the visitors whom fashion and the rage for trying new remedies sent thither were, for the most part, lodged in "little, clean, and convenient habitations" that lay straggling and separated from each other, a mile-and-a-half all round the springs.

The social meeting place of the company was even then the Walk—the Pantiles, and Parade of a later day. There, "shaded by spreading trees," the beaus and belles drank the waters. Nor had they to wander far from the springs in the search for amusement which filled their days. On one side of the Walk was a long row of shops, "plentifully stocked with all manner of toys, lace, gloves and stockings," where raffling might be enjoyed "as at Paris, in the Foire de Saint Germain." On the other stood the market, where "young, fair, fresh-coloured country girls, with clean linen, small straw hats and neat shoes and stockings," sold game, vegetables, flowers and fruit; while in the evening the whole company assembled at the bowling-green to dance in the open air on "a turf more soft and smooth than the finest carpet in the world."

The pleasure-seeking queen did not fail to supplement these *al fresco* balls with amusements of a more courtly nature. Every day there was dancing at her apartments, and other entertainments were devised by her "to digest the waters." It was to spite Miss Stewart, than whom no woman had "less wit or more beauty," that Catherine sent for Nell Gwynne and the players. But the placid, childish beauty showed no jealousy of the orange-girl. At "The Wells," there was many an occasion for her favourite game of "blind man's buff," and doubtless she built card castles of a very literal sort there. We know that that was the custom of this favourite "when the deepest play was going on in her apartments," and eager courtiers, striving for royal favour, handed her the cards.

De Grammont accounts for the popularity of the little watering-place very simply. "Here," he says, "one may live as one pleases; here is likewise deep play and no want of amorous intrigue."

It soon grew impossible to live as one pleased at "The Wells," and the "person of quality" who wrote that dreary seventeenth-century play, "Tunbridge Wells, or a Day's Courtship," was of opinion that "these dull waters render intrigue too phlegmatic and serious." Though less captious critics came in crowds—

"To see the fine Ladies in their Deshabille,
A Dress that's sometimes the most studied to kill"—

it was the high play that made "The Wells."

Tired of "a solitude of country squires, parsons' wives, and visiting tenants," the world of fashion eagerly forsook village life for a place where they might have each other's company, and win each other's money as they had done during the winter in town.

E. O., a game in which the bank gained two-and-a-half per cent. on all that was lost or won, was first set up at "The Wells," and other "unlawful games," Fair-chance, Faro, and Ace of Hearts, were traps for the unwary.

Fathers caned their sons on the Pantiles before all the company for "running them a great deal in debt." But few players escaped from the tables as well as a Mr. Hedges whose adventures have been circumstantially preserved for us.

This gentleman, in the year, 1715, had been two years married

to a lady of great beauty and large fortune. One day he began to bet for trifling sums, and bitten with this new freak, frequented the hazard tables every night till he lost his estate, his equipage, and his wife's jewels. Then, pulling his "repeating watch" forth from his pocket, he sought to wager it for sixty guineas, and since no person in the company would set even a third of that amount on it, he flung it on the floor and tried to dash out his brains against the marble mantelpiece.

The company restrained him from this act of violence, and he went home to be met by his wife with the tidings of his succession to his uncle's estate.

The unhappy man explained that he had wagered the reversion at the tables, and now owed £1,000 more than he could pay.

"My dear, you have lost but a trifle, and owe nothing," cried his wife. "Our brother and I have taken care to prevent the effects of your rashness, and are actually the persons who have won your fortune. We employed proper persons for this purpose, who brought their winnings to me. Your money, your equipage, are in my possession." The sequel to the story says that the grateful husband never afterwards played for the smallest sums.

One is not surprised at a summary order, issued in the reign of George II., but otherwise undated. It was probably occasioned by the coming to "The Wells," in 1737, of "a shoal of gamblers who encouraged every species of play—Hazard, Pharaoh (*sic*), and Ace of Hearts."

The Mandate runs :

QUARTER SESSIONS AT MAIDSTONE, GEORGE II.:—"This Court being informed that of late Years, at the usual Season of Resort, at Tunbridge Wells, in this County, several unlawful Games, called *Fairchance*, *Faro*, *Ace of Hearts*, and other unlawful Games, contrary to the Laws and Statutes of this Realm, are there carried on, exercised and supported, and several Persons attend to support the same who are not known to have any other visible Way of Living, to the Great Disturbance and Damage of his Majesty's good Subjects resorting to and frequenting the said Wells for their Health, or other lawful Occasions : For preventing which Mischiefs and Disorders, and suppressing of the said unlawful Games in the future, it is thought fit and ordered by this Court, that it be recommended to the several Justices of Peace of this County, of the Division wherein

Tunbridge Wells lie, or who shall be there residing, to assemble and meet together as often as there shall be Occasion to take and use such lawful Means as may be most effectual for preventing any of the said unlawful Games at the Places aforesaid ; or any Riots or Routs occasioned thereby ; and the Constables and Borsholders, and other Peace officers of the Parish of Speldhurst, and other Parishes in this County where Tunbridge Wells, or the Houses or Buildings thereunto adjoining, is, or are, situate, are hereby required to be aiding and assisting to the said Justices of Peace, as they and every one of them will answer the Contrary at their Peril : And the said Constables, Borsholders, and other Peace officers, are hereby further ordered to give publick Notice of the Order by affixing Copies thereof in the most notorious Places near Tunbridge Wells aforesaid : And it is also farther ordered by this Court, That this Order be forthwith printed and published in the *London Gazette* for the better Notification thereof, that no Person may pretend Ignorance."

The habit of play was too deep rooted to be more than temporarily restrained. Though E.O. is not mentioned in this Order, it was in full swing at "The Wells" in 1749, and from that place was introduced to the company of "The Bath."

From 1725 to 1734, a very notable character, one Bell Causey, "presided as absolute governess at Tunbridge Wells, and directed the Company in all their pleasures and amusements." She is described as "a fine, but very large woman, extremely well known in those days for attending with her nymphs at the Ring in Hyde Park with oranges, nosegays, etc., as likewise for an expert conveyance of *billet's doux*." During the summer season, service was "performed" every day at the chapel dedicated to King Charles the Martyr, and as the company came from the ministrations of the clergyman supported by their subscriptions, Bell would inveigle them to the rooms she conducted for "raffles or other amusing purposes," an incongruity which occasioned the satirical strain :

"Decent orders, decent airs,
Adorn the walks, the rooms, the prayers :
For beaux and belles to church come all,
Nothing prevents them but—a ball,
And most polite the congregation,
Tho' boots and dishabille's the fashion."

This "governess of Tunbridge Wells" was of a lavish disposition, adored for her gifts by the poor. When she took in hand the collection of a charity, the subscription for a raffle, or the getting up of an entertainment to amuse the company, she went very systematically about the matter. It was her "constant custom to place herself at the top of the steps leading to the Walks, and, as the company came from the chapel, with her apron spread in both hands, to hustle them, as they do chickens, to any place and for any purpose she wanted them for; and if she espied any newcomers of rank, she instantly wished them much joy of arriving so seasonably when there was an opportunity of entertaining the company with a public breakfast or tea-drinking."

So great, we are told, was the influence of this woman at "The Wells," that she "would not suffer the great Beau Nash to have any power there while she lived, and absolutely kept him from the place till she died."

The very next year, 1735, Dr. Pellett sent that "*beau garçon*" down to Mount Ephraim, though he swore he could not drink the Tunbridge waters, and he at once "took the lead in promoting union and every possible public entertainment for the company." The ladies wrote verses to him, and during his whole reign scarce a day, and never a week, passed without some junketing of a public kind.

There is preserved in the British Museum a coloured print of "The Remarkable Characters who were at Tunbridge Wells with Richardson in 1748, with references in his own writing," which, combined with a letter he wrote to his "filial friend," Miss Westcomb, gives us a lively picture of "The Wells" under Nash's *régime*.

The great novelist's verdict on the place was akin to Horace Walpole's epigram on Bath: "These watering-places that mimic a capital and add vulgarisms and familiarities of their own, seem to me like abigails in cast gowns, and I am not young enough to take up with either."

"You are absolutely right," says the creator of Pamela, "in judging that I would rather be in a desert than in a place so public and so giddy. I traverse the utmost edges of the walks that I may stand in nobody's way, nor have my dizziness increased by the swimming triflers."

Even sex seems to have been no defence against his criticism. The summer he spent at "The Wells" was "a very full season," and scores of belles were present whom he ungallantly decried as "flatterers, triflers who swim along these walks, self-satisfied and pleased, and looking defiance to men," bashfulness being considered as lack of breeding. "When one such starts up, she is nicknamed a Beauty, and old fellows and young fellows are set a-spinning after her."

Miss Peggy Banks, a long-necked beauty, is one of the fine ladies in voluminous hoops sketched for us with pen and pencil.

"Miss Banks was the belle," says the novelist, "when I first came down. Yet she had been so many seasons here that she obtained but a faint and languid attention. The smart began to put her down in their list of had-beens."

With the rival who supplanted her, the Kitty Crocodile of Foote's "Capuchin," the model of Beatrix Esmond and Baroness Bernstein, the world's tongue was not yet busy. Miss Chudleigh's marriage with Hervey was still a secret, nor had the Duke of Kingston appeared on the scene. The maid of honour was "the triumphant toast of the Wells, a lively, sweet-tempered, gay, self-admired, and, not altogether without reason, generally admired lady. She moved not without crowds after her. She smiled at every one. Every one smiled before they saw her, when they heard she was on the Walk. She played, she lost, she won—all with equal good humour. But, alas! she went off before she was wished to go off. And then the fellows' hearts were almost broke for a new beauty."

Cibber, the Laureate, at the ripe age of seventy-seven, was still fond of new faces. He fell "over head and ears in love with Miss Chudleigh, and her admirers (such was his happiness) were not jealous of him, but, pleased with that wit in him which they had not, were always for calling him to her. She said pretty things, for she was Miss Chudleigh. He said pretty things, for he was Mr. Cibber; and all the company, men and women, seemed to think they had an interest in what was said, and were half as well pleased as if they had said the sprightly things themselves; and mighty well contented were they to be second-hand repeaters of the pretty things."

This "extraordinary old man," whose conversation "the great Doctor" said was "one half oaths," was in great favour at "The

Wells." During his stay, he had written a dialogue between a father and a daughter, calculated, in Richardson's opinion, to "throw down all distinction between parents and children." This he read to "half a dozen at a time of the fair sex," and every daughter in his audience seemed "mighty pleased with a lesson that will teach her to top her father."

The novelist did not fail to rally the playwright on his passion. "Once," he says, "I faced the laureate, squatted upon one of the benches, with a face more wrinkled than ordinary with disappointment. 'I thought,' said I, 'you were of the party at the tea treats. Miss Chudleigh is gone into the tea room.' 'Pshaw !' said he, 'there is no coming at her, she is so surrounded by the toupets.' And I left him upon the pet. But he was called, too, soon after ; and in he flew, and his face shone again and looked smooth."

Oddly enough, Richardson makes no mention of the chief of lexicographers in his letter to Miss Westcomb. Nor does wordy Boswell give any hint of a visit his patron paid "The Wells" at this time. But the plate of "Celebrities" shows Dr. Johnson in grave converse with the Bishop of Salisbury, while his cherished "Tetty" turns her back on "the noted Mr. Whiston." This eccentric's part was "showing eclipses, and explaining other phenomena of the stars (*sic*), and preaching the Millennium and anabaptism to gay people" who, if they had white teeth, heard him "with open mouths, though, perhaps, shut their hearts," and after his lecture was over, ran from him "to flutter among the loud-laughing young fellows upon the Walks, like boys and girls at a breaking-up."

Despite Miss Chudleigh's triumphs, the slighted Miss Banks seems to have had a constant cavalier in Mr. Lyttelton. He was the author whose "Dialogues" provoked the Johnsonian comment, "That man sat down to write a book to tell the world what the world had all his life been telling him." High praise, one might think, if the Doctor had not gone on to call the work "a nugatory performance." The Speaker and Lord Powis were also admirers of this lady.

One is reminded by a letter of Garrick's from "The Wells" of another criticism of the Doctor's: "Davy is futile." "I go to bed," the player says, "at eleven, rise at seven drink no malt, and think of nothing. Old Cibber is here, and very merry we are. Mr. Lyttelton and I are cup and can. I played at E. O.,

and won. I don't dance, and eat like a ploughman." In Richardson's plate, he is represented in a fine red waistcoat, paying his court to Frasi, the prima donna of the opera.

A less easy life was that of Loggan, "original dwarf to the Prince and Princess of Wales," and fan painter. He limned these "Celebrities," and introduced his own misshapen form into the left corner of the plate, where he stands talking to the "Woman of the Wells."

This sobriquet would seem to be another nickname of Mrs. Sarah Porter, the "Queen of the Touters." Nash brought her to his rooms in the Walk to solicit the subscriptions for him, and we are told that "there was not a person of the least rank or credit that she let escape. She pretended to know the fathers, mothers, uncles, aunts, and every relation of any person of distinction, had a shrewd memory, and could recollect or forget whatever was for her interest." It was her custom to stand at the ball-room door and make "some thousand curseys in a day." Nor had she the least faith or inclination to trust. If any individual did not immediately subscribe to her, she would take her book, pen, and ink, in her hand, and follow them all round the room when it was full of company, which made many of them often very angry; but rating, swearing at her, or any other severe method was never known to put her out of humour, or make her uncivil to the company.

Many other curious figures were seen daily on the Pantiles during Nash's *régime*. At one time "Lord" Raulins, "the Wells cryer," used to sing the "Touting Song" there, and deliver speeches taught him by the Duke of Wharton. This peer took him to London "ridiculously but richly dressed." For a time he showed off at the clubs, but pride is said to have turned his head. He went mad and died in the parish workhouse.

Another person of flighty wits, "Lady Tunbridge," a tall, meagre figure, fantastically dressed, used constantly to be seen about the Walks, muttering to herself. It is pleasant to know that, "not being in any way mischievous, she picked up a comfortable subsistence."

The company's shoes were cleaned by "Sir Robert," who was very like in face to Sir Robert Walpole, and used to tell the crowd, when Sir Edward Walpole visited "The Wells," that it was surprising his brother did not take more notice of him.

Dunmail, "the prophet," was a person of greater standing. His craze was that he had been in the world ever since the creation, and would never die. In every affair of importance he believed himself directed by the angel Gabriel, a delusion which led sometimes to ludicrous results. On one occasion a pedlar at his request told him his name. "Are you sure that is your real name?" said the prophet. "Certainly," replied the packman. "Why, then, I have received an order from the angel Gabriel to give you ten guineas." "The same angel has blessed me with an order to receive it," said the pedlar, quietly, as he pocketed the coin.

No survey, however slight, of the social life of "The Wells" would be complete without a mention of those "Water Poets, an innocent tribe," whom Addison said deserved all the support he could give them. Less friendly is another contemporary criticism, "They begin with a blaze and end with a vapour." There is, in truth, a good deal of sameness in the verses the poor poets used to "scribble every season, to deify some nymph or lady." It was the custom for a copy of these poems to be left at the bookseller's shop, and entered in a book there, for the inspection and entertainment of the company. The curious may to-day scan more than a hundred of the water poets' effusions in various collections of *Tunbrigolia*.

In 1756, "the great Beau Nash" died, not before he had outlived his popularity even in "the celebrated province he added to the empire of Bath." The star of "The Wells" was now on the wane, though "the civil and polite Mr. Caulet" followed manfully in the Beau's "generous steps."

The most detailed sketch we have of the social life of "The Wells" is preserved for us in a mere newspaper cutting, the *naïve* letter of "Marinus," sent to a friend on the 30th of August, 1767, from his quiet, snug lodging on Mount Ephraim, "where he lived with the family."

"By a strict Perseverance in using the Waters, with a gentle Ride every Day when the Weather would permit me," says our author, "I have got quite rid of the Relaxation and vast Depression, the severe Fever I had last Winter and a nine months Ague had thrown me into."

"As to the place and its Environs, it is to me in fine Weather as agreeable and pleasant a Place as ever I saw, and in bad Weather as disagreeable except on the Walks themselves, where

either by Chance or Foresight in the first Constructors you can go from the Well to all the Rooms, Coffee houses and Shops, without being exposed to Rain or Sun.

"On your first Arrival, nay, even on the Road, you are *touted* (a cant word for soliciting your Custom at this place) by all the Bakers, Butchers, Brewers, Grocers, Tavern Keepers, Water Dippers, etc., etc., and on the first Morning, before you are well awake, by the Musick, to whom I find, besides a small present for thus disturbing you, every Family and single Gentleman subscribes from Half-a-Crown to Half-a-Guinea, for which they play in a Gallery built for that Purpose facing the Great Rooms on the Walks three times a Day, viz. from 9 till 12 in the Morning, from 12 till 2 at Noon, and from 6 till 7 in the Afternoon, and at the Balls. On your entering into any of the Great Rooms, you are solicited in the same Manner, where the Subscription is from a Crown to a Guinea, each Person according to their Rank; for which you are entitled to walk in the Rooms, to have Fires lighted for you, to read the News Papers which come every Day, to Wax Wafers, Pens and Ink. There are two Rooms, one on the Walks which I find very necessary and comfortable to me in bad Weather, the other on the other side which is seldom troubled but in the evenings. The Company go to these Rooms alternately, every Evening, to play at Cards or converse together as at Bath; and there is a Ball once a Week at each Room; on Tuesdays at that on the Walks, and on Friday at the other; the Expence of which is Half-a-Crown Entrance for each Gentleman and one Shilling each Lady, and this, I must own, I think a much better Method than subscribing Two Guineas, as at Bath, especially to Persons who stay but a short Time, as it is no Expence but when you go.

"There is likewise the Gentlemen's Coffee House on the Walks kept by a very decent Woman, where you likewise subscribe five Shillings and where the political and other Disputes between the Gentlemen (some of them, I assure you, very high Characters) are particularly entertaining and amusing. Then there is the Bookseller's Shop, kept by a very facetious, intelligent Man, where you subscribe as to the Great Rooms and have what Books you please Home to your Lodging to read, and there being a great and well-chosen Variety, I found it particularly useful and agreeable to me in bad Weather.

" There is likewise a Collection made by some Person of the Company for the Clergyman, from one-and-a-half to two Guineas for each Family. This Gentleman performs Service twice every Day, and is kind in procuring us as many excellent Sermons as possible from the dignified and other Clergy who visit this Place. There is likewise a Collection and voluntary Subscription for a Dissenting Minister here, a very well behaved Gentleman. Mr. Derrick is, I find, Master of the Ceremonies here, as at Bath, and is supported, as there, by having a Ball at each Room, Tickets for which are five Shillings each, but he gives so much satisfaction in this important Office that very few give him less than Gold for his Tickets.

" There is another small Subscription to the Sweeper of the Walks (which are kept very clean) of one Shilling each Person, or as much more as the Generosity of the Donors please, but not less. At going from hence, you give the Water Dippers, a Set of very decent Women who constantly attend at the Well to serve you with your Water from the Spring, from a Crown to a Guinea, or more if you stay a long Time, and likewise to the Waiters of the Rooms, who, I find, have nothing but what the Company please to give them on going away, and which, I find, is according to the Rank of the Family.

" Almost every Body go to Market here themselves, all the Market women standing at the Steps at the end of the Walks from seven till ten in the Morning in such a Manner that you are almost obliged to pass through them. They behave with great Civility.

" We have a good old Woman here, the best Pastry-Cook in England. I wish you was here to eat one of her Chicken Pyes and Cheese Cakes. There are plenty of Milliners and Toy Shops.

" The Post comes in every Day except Monday about eleven in the Morning, and goes out every Day except Saturday and Monday at five in the Afternoon. They have been this Season particularly well accommodated by two Flys which run in opposition to each other, which carry four Persons only and are never more than five Hours or five-and-a-half on the Road. One sets out at five in the Morning from hence and gets in London at eleven and returns from thence at one. The other sets out from London at the same Time in the Morning and returns from

hence at one, by which the Company have an Opportunity of having Turbots, Fruit, etc., in Time for Dinner and of sending Wheat Ears from hence to their Friends in London. The Fare is Half-a-Guinea. The Common Stage Coach sets out every Monday, Wednesday and Friday for London at six in the Morning and arrives about two. It returns every Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday at the same Hours."

It was in the reign of George III., as we have said, that the decadence of "The Wells" began. As early as 1773, only six years after the letter of "Marinus," an anonymous critic describes the company at this watering-place as "an odd olio of old maids, lively widows, batchelors and a few nobility." Still, life went on its old course. The company lounged, laughed, talked nonsense, and lolled the day away after sipping the waters. Their morning was passed "in an undress, in drinking the waters, in private or public breakfasts, in attending prayers at the chapel, in social converse on the parade, at the coffee house, in the public rooms or booksellers' shop, and in raffling, cheapening and buying goods at the milliners', turners' and other shops." Later in the day, there were cotillon dances and private concerts, with now and then an "adventitious and extraordinary novelty, a painter, a musician, a juggler, a fire-eater or a philosopher." After dinner all went "dressed to the parade again and to the rooms to tea in private parties or in public." At night to the balls or assembly, sometimes to the theatre, when there were any in the company who would bespeak a play.

"Poor Tunbridge," says a chronicler of fashionable nothings in the *European Magazine* of 1782, "has been long on the wane. Except the Duke of Leeds and Lord Caermarthen, who perhaps may have an hereditary failing for the place, no other individual of great consequence appears with any constancy the tutelary of this place, and Lord Caermarthen's *umbra*, Mr. Jackson, is oftener present than his lordship."

"Royal" Weymouth and Scarborough had supplanted "The Wells" with the exclusives. "What company there is there," we are told gravely, "is of the best, except a black-leg or two."

But "The Wells," notwithstanding its rivals, held up its head gallantly and duly observed the rules of its M.C. The code of Tyson in 1780 is the earliest that has come down to us :

I.—That there be two Public Balls, every week, on Tuesdays and Fridays. Ladies to pay 2s. ; gentlemen, 3s. 6d.

II.—To begin with Minuets and then Country Dances. All restrictions in point of dress to be abolished, except in regard to those ladies who intend to dance Minuets, who are requested to be properly dressed for this purpose.

III.—One Cotillion (*sic*) only, immediately after tea, will be danced, and to prevent the time being lost in the choice of the particular Cotillion, and in practising it, the Master of the Ceremonies will undertake himself to name it, and its figure shall be previously put up in the Great Rooms, that they may be acquainted with it.

IV.—As the custom of dancing two following dances only, with the same lady, at present prevails pretty generally, the Master of the Ceremonies thinks it proper to establish it as a rule here.

V.—The Master of the Ceremonies thinks it almost needless to observe that it is deemed a point of good breeding, for those ladies who have gone down with the dance, to continue in their places till the rest have done the same.

VI.—The Master of the Ceremonies desires the company to come early, that the Balls may begin at the usual hour of seven.

VII.—The Master of the Ceremonies desires to have the honour of presenting himself to the Company on their arrival, that he may not be wanting in the necessary attentions to them.

VIII.—The Chapel, being originally built by subscription, is not endowed with any provision for an established minister. As he depends for his support on the voluntary contributions of the company that frequent the place, it is hoped he may rely with confidence, for the reward of his labours, on the benevolence of those who reap the benefit of them.

IX.—It is humbly requested of all persons who frequent the rooms to subscribe, to enable the renters of them to defray the many necessary and heavy expenses attending them.

X.—Besides the Two Rooms, the other general places of Subscription are the Circulating Library, the Ladies' Coffee Room, the Gentlemen's Coffee Room and the Post Office.

XI.—The Water Dippers at the Spring, who are appointed by the Lord of the Manor, have no allowance, but depend on what is given them by those who drink the waters.

XII.—The Master of the Ceremonies hopes it will not be thought improper for him to recommend to families on leaving the place (having been any time here) to consider the Waiters of each of the Rooms. He will not presume to dictate to public generosity. Those only, therefore, who wish to be directed in this will receive the necessary information on application to him.

XIII.—It has been an old-established custom for every lady and gentleman to drop a Shilling into the Sweepers' Box, and as the poor man and his wife constantly attend the Walks and the Rooms morning and evening, and have no other means of subsisting, it is hoped that none will refuse to comply with so small and equitable a bounty.

The following were the prices of cards at this time:—Commerce with one pack, 8s. 6d., in the morning, 7s. ; Loo with one pack, 6s., two, 8s. 6d. ; Whist with two packs, 8s., in the morning, 7s. ; Piquet or All-Fours, first pack, 5s., each pack after, 3s. ; Quadrille, 8s. 6d., in the morning, 7s. ; Quinze, *ad libitum*, from 8s. 6d. ; Lottery with one pack, 10s., with two packs, 12s.

In 1801, a modern plague of watering places was introduced at “The Wells.” “Asses,” says an old guide-book, “were first brought into fashion by a lady of rank here in 1801.”

Painsinck’s “Rules for the Company” bring us down to the year 1817.

The weekly ball had then become what we now call a “Cinderella” dance. It began at nine and ended at twelve. Gentlemen were required to change their partners every two dances, and ladies who had “precedence of place” to take their places according to their precedence before the dance began. After then, they were requested to stand up in the dance without claiming it. “The custom among ladies,” we are told, “of allowing their acquaintances to stand up above them is inconvenient and improper, and those who do it will be considered as violators of rule and decorum.” Thursday and Saturday were now Card Assembly Evenings, and when a party of gentlemen and ladies chose to get up a dance on those nights, they paid “extra for the same.” The music on these occasions and at the balls was provided by a band hired by the Master of the Ceremonies and the Proprietor of the Rooms and paid “in the following manner. The Proprietor of the Rooms to pay six-pence out of the money received for the admission of every

person at the Balls, and a general subscription of the company at 10s. 6d. each, a book for which purpose is open in the Rooms." Hazard and "other unlawful games" were forbidden in the public rooms, nor were cards allowed on Sunday evenings.

With the laying out of Tea Gardens by an "industrious gardener," in 1829, the old life of "The Wells" may be said to have come to an end. "When the company ceases to frequent the Rooms, be assured the Wells will drop," said Nash. The prophecy has fulfilled itself. The fashion of English watering-places is gone. At what place of the kind now is the company, "except a black-leg or two," of the best?

From the Eagle.

FOUR LETTERS.

LADY LYNCH, Adler Hotel, Gebenstal, to MISS ANN DUCKETT,
Eaton Place West, London.

“ June 25th.

“ DEAR ANN,

“ Only conceive how provoking!—how inconsiderate!—after all our summer arrangements were made and settled; after our rooms at Gebenstal had been taken; after I had got as far as Botzen, expecting to meet Polly and her children there, what does one of those wretched little Giustiano Marconis do but fall ill of the measles at Florence, thus obliging her unfortunate mamma to put off her journey, to throw me over, and to remain in all that stifling heat without a soul to speak to except those odious Neapolitan relatives of her husband, whom I am sure she must rue the day she ever set eyes on! Really, when I received her letter, I felt the strongest possible impulse to turn right round, go back to Italy, and stay with poor Polly Marconis through her troubles. A few minutes, however, convinced me that it was out of the question. At sixty-two the time for knight-errantry, if it has ever existed, is distinctly over; the expenditure of energy, nay, of actual tissue, is too great; one pays too dearly for it. Seeing, therefore, that this was obviously an impossibility; seeing that it was equally impossible to remain where I was; that my rooms at the hotel were actually engaged and would doubtless have to be paid for; seeing that every one knows that my summer quarters have been fixed for the Austrian Tyrol, it seemed that the only thing to be done was to push on by myself with as little delay as possible. Accordingly I desired Perkins to get ready her boxes; telegraphed to the station nearest Gebenstal to have a carriage in readiness next morning; wrote to poor Polly to give her my best sympathies, and to tell her that, in my humble opinion, Miss Caterina

ought to be whipped ; started at 7.15 from the hotel at Botzen ; and here I am just arrived at the Adler Hotel, a white-faced, green-shuttered affair, standing at the edge of the road, with a swinging signpost overhead, supported upon a pole painted with the black and yellow stripes of Austria, with a heterogeneous crowd of guides and other hangers-on in close attendance, and with a circle of mountains behind it, snow-capped, glittering, with, best of all, a temperature at least ten degrees cooler than I have enjoyed for the last seven or eight weeks.

" My rooms, I found, had been kept for me in a sort of *dépendance* opposite the main building, so, having taken possession of them, and written my name in the visitors' book, I was taking a general survey of the scenery when a bell outside rang violently, whereupon Perkins hastily stuck a few additional and wholly unnecessary hairpins into my hair, suggested that I should put on my best lace cap instead of the third best one which I keep for travelling—an idea I promptly snubbed—and I descended to the *table d'hôte*, crossing for that purpose the road which divided the two portions of the hotel, and through a low hall or passage, something between a cellar and a tap-room, crowded, like the entrances to all Tyrolean hotels are, with a motley crowd of guides, with pipes dangling like decorations upon their breasts ; with sellers of edelweiss and mosaic brooches, and stout serving girls with huge earrings and well-filled blue bodices. Through all these I passed, the landlord himself preceding me up the stairs, and sweeping to right and left a thinner fringe of retainers as he advanced.

" The dining-room was a low room, though happily not quite so low as the hall underneath, and as I advanced to my place near the head of the table I encountered an atmosphere of boiled cabbage and a deluge of Germanic vociferation which nearly drove me back. Such brandishing of dinner knives ! such unearthly aspirates and gutturals ! such gurgling of victuals down audibly voracious throats ! You know my slight love for that eminently successful section of humanity ? I mentally made the observation that if my fellow sojourners proved to be all of the same type, even my regard for my own consistency would not enable me to stand out against them for more than a couple of days.

" Fortunately when I had taken my seat, waved away some

stuff of the nature of porridge which had been presented to me, adjusted my glasses and looked round me, I found that immediately opposite to me were seated a fresh-complexioned, unmistakably English couple, evidently not long married—he clerically decorous in pepper and salt and a white tie ; she in a pink-spotted cotton frock, with soft fair hair arranged in a neat knot rather high up upon her head ; small, rather prim features, and a sleek rounded figure like a young linnet's. They were very young, both of them, and, I suspected, a little shy still in their mutual relations ; a trifle provincial, perhaps, but a lady and gentleman unmistakably and at the first glance.

"When the bustle of my entrance had a little subsided, the young man looked across the table, and made me a little quick official bow, which at once fixed his position. This, I said to myself, is evidently the English chaplain, whose presence had been prominently put forward as one of the attractions to Gebenstal. A moment later his wife also glanced towards me, evidently with a similar intention. Unfortunately my eye was still upon her husband, and before I had time to turn it encouragingly in her direction, she had rapidly averted her own, with a blush which covered her pretty little face up to the forehead, a small expression of offended dignity coming down at the same moment and seating itself unmistakably about the corners of her pretty mouth.

"I waited to let this momentary ebullition subside, then made some observation to the husband relative to the heat of the day and the dustiness of the roads, to which he responding, in my next conversational sally I appealed to the wife, making a little gesture of salutation as I did so, and before the end of the meal we were all three chatting together upon the friendliest terms possible.

"Dinner over, we turned out on to the road, which, as you know, is in all these Tyrolese places the rallying point of society. In this case it is a large, wide, very clean road, and as the only one in this part of the country, has a dignity and importance unknown to more perambulated regions. The sun had set, and everything was rapidly growing dark. The mountains stood solemnly round, like a circle of guardians set about some State prisoners, relaxing a little in their vigilance, however, to the eastward, where we could see a narrow gap, and

a dark blue lower range fading away towards Venice and the sea. You who know the Dolomites can imagine the general effect, without my troubling myself to construct any elaborate word pictures. Gebenstal is not, I believe, geographically speaking, part of the Dolomites, but the character of the scenery seems to me to be much the same. Huge mountain-masses, carrying the corn and maize, the fir trees and the potato crops of the valleys for some distance upwards upon their shoulders, but always ending in great untamable peaks and precipices of naked rock—cracked and torn, jagged and tremendous. Grim enough, yet exciting too, even to one who, like myself, prefers Nature with its rough edges pruned off, and its savagery a little pared down.

"I bent my steps towards a sort of small wooden *châlet*, surrounded by a balcony, which stood upon the opposite side of the road, the two young people accompanying me to do the honours. The chaplain fetched a camp-stool, found another for his wife, and we sat down on the balcony, the air being perfectly warm and free from damp. A great pyrotechnic display of summer lightning was being exhibited opposite for our benefit, lighting up the peaks, now one and now another rising suddenly to its full height, like an army obeying an inaudible word of command. I saw the little wife insinuate a hand into her husband's arm under cover of the darkness and press it with evident excitement, and once when a second flash followed the first sooner than was reasonably to be expected, plainly perceived her cuddling her pretty little bird-like head against him. I hope, however, that she was not aware of my observation.

"'Dick would like that, wouldn't he, Cyril?' she whispered.

"The chaplain made some inarticulate reply, and we were again silent, while the great aerial show went on in front of us.

"'I hope we shall have some more when he is here, don't you?' she added aloud.

"'You are expecting a friend?' I inquired, by way of encouraging conversation.

"The little chaplainess paused a moment, and though it was dark, I could feel that her face had assumed the same little expression of prim dignity I had detected at dinner time.

"'Yes, we are expecting my brother—my *only* brother,' she said in a tone intended, I think, to be politely distant, and

perhaps repressive, but which, owing to a tender tremor in the last two words, did not quite realize its intention.

"Do you expect him soon?"

"We do not quite know. He is in London now, and he says that he is getting very tired of it, and would like to get away into the mountains. He has a great many engagements, however, and cannot of course get away until he has fulfilled them—it would not be fair upon his friends. After Ascot he hopes to come. My home—I mean my brother's place—is not far from Ascot, and he always has a party of friends with him for it. This year there will be only *gentlemen*," she added with the same little air of dignity and self-importance.

"My brother-in-law is the squire of my parish," the young chaplain explained in rather abrupt tones, as if anxious to have his explanation over and have done with it—"of the parish where I am curate, and I robbed him lately of his housekeeper," he added with a laugh and a glance at his wife.

"Cyril, dear, what nonsense!" that little lady said in a tone of remonstrance.

"Well, my dear, do you mean to say that I didn't? What does your aunt, Lady Eleanor Magendie, think? That I am a wolf in sheep's clothing, pretending to be a minister of the Word in order to catch heiresses!" The young fellow gave a frank unconstrained laugh which at once confuted the accusation and made a friend of myself upon the spot.

"But the little chaplainess was evidently not pleased.

"My aunt, you know, is not a Churchwoman," she said primly. "The Magendies are all Presbyterians."

"And any libel of a member of the Establishment is therefore to be expected of them. Is that it, my dear? Well, it doesn't speak well for Presbyterianism, though I suppose as a good Episcopalian I ought not to complain. Anyhow, it puts the feelings of some of your relations in pretty strong relief, doesn't it?"

"Dick doesn't think so. You know that very well."

"Ah, Dick—no, not Dick; but then Dick is a Red Republican. He would have given you to any one you chose to fancy. Dick has no prejudices."

"He was still speaking when there came the sound of steps behind us, and two ladies appeared at the entrance of the little

châlet. It had grown nearly quite dark, so that they were only visible as a pair of indeterminate forms, a taller and a shorter one ; feminine evidently, by the amount of cubic space they occupied and by the rustle of their garments, but as far as quality, age, beauty, or the reverse were concerned absolutely undistinguishable. We grew suddenly silent, as a small company does when it finds itself unexpectedly augmented ; the chaplain lifted his hat professionally ; I peered into the darkness to try and make out what they were like, and in the silence a dull rumble, like a slow procession of heavily-laden carts passing down the mountain side, made itself audible. The next minute, and while my attention was still concentrated upon the new-comers, a fresh flash, nearer, more vivid, and this time forked, darted out of the blackness, turning the range opposite into a succession of inky peaks, suffusing the sky with yellow, and lighting up the occupants of the doorway with vivid distinctness. As it did so I was startled by the beauty revealed in the face nearest to me. Eyes and skin are naturally the two points brought out strongest by such a momentary revelation, but such eyes, my dear ! and such a skin ! Such great dark orbs ; such a lovely colour in the cheeks ! You will shrug your shoulders as you always do, and say that I am indulging in one of my usual bursts of hyperbole, but even you, my good Ann, with your strong-minded-woman's contempt for so mere a trifle as feminine beauty, would have been as much startled as I was had you been sitting there, and would have been obliged to own that there are circumstances under which that contemptible quality possesses a directly stimulating, nay, thrilling effect—even upon another woman. There was not much time to see it, however, for as the light flashed and faded, the elder of the two ladies, at whom I had scarcely glanced, gave a sudden scream or squeak of dismay, and, turning, scuttled out of the *châlet* back to the hotel, her companion quickly following her.

“ ‘ Dear me, what a splendid creature ! ’ I exclaimed as they vanished. ‘ Who in the world is she ? They were not at the *table d'hôte* surely, were they ? ’

“ ‘ They are a Mrs. and Miss Misselbrook,’ the chaplain answered. ‘ We thought at first they were American, but it seems they are Australian. They have taken the little *dépendance*—that one there that you can see the corner of—and have their

meals served there. I have met Miss Misselbrook several times, and she seemed intelligent, though colonial—at least I suppose colonial is the word. Some of her expressions are odd. My wife has taken rather a prejudice to her in consequence. Eh, Kitty?' he added, glancing over with a laugh at that little lady.

"Indeed, indeed, Cyril, I have not taken any prejudice at all. I hope I am not in the habit of taking prejudices," she replied indignantly. "It is simply that we do not know anything about them. I am sure I never heard the name before in my life, and I must say they seem to me very—well, odd. Although you are the chaplain here, I cannot see that we are bound to make acquaintance with *every one* who happens to come to the place," she added in her little prim tone. "You called upon them after we saw them in church, and that is surely enough. There would be no end of it if we were bound to make friends with *every one*. Would there?" she added, turning appealingly to me.

"Perhaps not. Though there does not seem to be any very formidable number of applicants here at present," I said. "However, so long as you make an exception in my favour I am content," I added laughingly.

"Oh! but that is *quite* different. We know *all* about you. Please, please don't think that anything I said could possibly apply—could mean——. Only I do so dislike the idea of getting mixed up with people whom—well, whom one doesn't feel one would get on with. If I *ought*, I will, you *know*, Cyril, if it is really, really *necessary*," she added, clasping her hands with the air of a small martyr who sees the rack and the thumb-screws in immediate prospect.

"Bless your heart, there is no ought in the matter at all that I can see, my dear Kitty. Don't trouble your little head to do anything you don't like," he answered, getting up as he spoke and offering me his hand to rise, a wind having suddenly found its way towards us from the mountains. Entering the hotel the two young people held back politely at the doorway in order to allow me to go first, and I heard the little wife whispering something eagerly into her husband's ear, of which the word 'Dick' reached my own ears twice, and each time in a tone of unmistakably sisterly anxiety.

"And now, my dear Ann, I must to bed, to bed. If you are grateful to me for this prolonged effusion show it by writing to

me forthwith, and telling me what likelihood there is of your tearing yourself from your various tea-parties and joining me here. If I do not get a letter within a week, never expect to receive another line from your deeply offended and hence-forward inflexibly silent cousin,

"ARABELLA JANE LYNCH."

[The same to the same.]

"July 9th.

"So you won't come? Not even with the prospect of laughing at what you call my insatiable gregariousness? Well, admitting that I am gregarious—what then? At my age, and under my circumstances, what would become of me if I were not so? if I could not pick up a few strands from other people's woof to weave into my own; steal, if you prefer the simile, a few younger rays to illuminate my old embers? Who was the Frenchwoman who, when asked what she lived upon, answered, 'Upon curiosity.' Well, I too live upon curiosity. Life even at its tamest and dullest is a constant entertainment to me—queer nondescript thing that it is! For the last few weeks, for instance, I have been subsisting largely on the expectation of this young Mr. Dick St. Leger's arrival. When you hear nothing day and night but the charms and excellences of a particular person, I defy you—particularly if you are a woman and an idle one—not to get up a certain amount of excitement and expectation about that person. Since that first evening I wrote you such a detailed account of, I have seen an immensity of our chaplain and his wife (their name, by the way, is Eastgood). The former I like particularly. He has enough of the parson about him to remind one that he is not a layman, without any of that insufferable sacerdotal assumption which, to my mind, is one of the least attractive features of what Douglas Jerrold called the surplice population. He is genial, he is manly, he is not at all pretentious. He is hard-working, too, I suspect, when he gets a chance, which certainly is not at a place like this, where idleness reigns supreme. His little wife, it is true, has pretensions enough, but then they are the most innocent kind possible. That she was born Miss Catherine St. Leger, and that the St. Legers of Belmont Abbey, in the county of Berkshire, are amongst the most important members of the

English untitled aristocracy, is evidently the cardinal fact of that small bundle of impressions which she calls her mind. That in marrying her curate she has abandoned that exalted sphere she evidently feels, but I will do her the justice to say that she does not seem to regret the descent. That it was a tremendous one, however, she cannot help being aware of any more than she can help secretly desiring that those she meets should be aware that in the simple chaplain's wife they behold no less a personage than the quondam mistress of Belmont Abbey and sister of that socially important personage, Richard St. Leger, Esq.

"Every day I hear more about this Richard, or Dick, his sayings and doings, his possessions and perfections. I have been shown his photograph; I know the names of his dogs and his hunters; I feel as if I had known him from earliest infancy, and had assisted at his christening. The other inmates of our Eagle I have not seen much of, with the exception of Miss Misselbrook, who, I own, interests me. The mother is a non-entity, and a vulgar one, but the girl herself is an attractive study. She likes to come to my room and to tell me about her life in Australia, which does not, somehow, give me a very exalted impression of our antipodes. Were I a man I should certainly fall in love with those eyes of hers, which if not quite so startlingly big as they appeared to be on the evening I got my first sensational glimpse of them, are still quite large enough and splendid enough, taken in connection with the rest of the face they belong to, to charm the heart out of any reasonable man's breast. What will Mr. Dick St. Leger think of them, I wonder, when he comes? Write soon.

"Your affectionate cousin,

"ARABELLA JANE LYNCH.

"P.S.—The Giustiano Marconis child is better, but the rest of the brood are down with measles. Poor Polly!"

[The same to the same.]

"July 29th.

"Well, my dear Ann, at last the long-expected hero has appeared. Oh, my dear, such a disappointment! such a woeful, fearful disappointment! I don't know how to describe it to you.

If I had been a young girl myself, and had been looking forward eagerly for weeks to this all-accomplished hero's coming, I could not possibly have felt it more acutely. Really, when he first came into the room I could have cried, I was so vexed. And yet, in all respects but one, he is as nice-looking a young fellow as one could wish to see, with a fresh sunshiny face which does one good to look at, and a voice to match it, frank, eager, boyish, confiding ; hair like his sister's, a yellow moustache, soft and silky, which has evidently never made acquaintance with a razor ; eyes blue and widely open ; a mouth, as much as one can see of it, well shaped like his sister's, though without her primness and air of small self-importance. He dresses well in a careless easy-going fashion, and is addicted to the wearing of loose tweed coats and red ties, which somehow on him do not look loud, but give that desirable touch of colour of which the modern masculine costume is so painfully devoid. He is certainly intelligent, too ; quite as much so as any young man of his age need be. But—I can hear you say—if he is all this, what more did the woman expect ? Did she look for a Sir Galahad or the archangel Michael himself in the person of a Berkshire squire that such an unusual catalogue of masculine merits should only produce horror and dismay ? True, my dear Ann, quite true ; but if you could only see him you would understand the situation at a glance. He is more, much more, than I have described, brighter, better-looking, pleasanter—but—but—there is the dreadful but coming—but he wears a great horrible sole to one of his shoes, a sole three or four inches thick at least, made of wood or cork or some such material, and this sole gives him the most dreadfully uncomfortable, top-heavy, one-sided look you can possibly imagine ! If he were a wretched sickly creature all round, it would be nothing ; one would understand the situation, I mean, then and make up one's mind to it ; but such a bright, active, good-looking, joyous-natured youngster ! It really is too cruel, too tragic ! A log round the neck of a greyhound, a hawk with a string to its leg, will give you some faint idea of the anomaly of the combination. Boots like his are, of course, common enough ; one sees them in the streets, but then one instinctively averts one's eyes from them, feeling it to be only charity to do so. But there is no question of averting one's eyes here. Why should any woman wish to avert her

eyes from such an embodiment of all that is well-born, well-bred, rich, and joyous, and yet I never find my own eyes resting upon him without a sense of shuddering discomfort, awakened by the sight of that terrible boot. Happily he is not conscious of it himself; at any rate not acutely so. He has made up his mind to it apparently, and accepts it with a sort of cheery philosophy which is evidently part of his nature. Even with its aid, his foot, when he is standing at ease, barely rests upon the ground. In walking he makes use of a stick which is never far from his hand. He does not carry it, however, as a lame man usually carries a stick. He twirls it airily between two fingers, raps the trunks of the trees right and left with it as he passes, flourishes it aloft in the air, and only now and then applies it to its customary use.

"He and I made friends the very first evening of our acquaintance, and he is always dropping into my sitting-room on the slightest of pretences, or no pretence at all, and settling down for a chat. I hear a quick uneven tread in the passage, a tune hummed in a loud confident voice, then a cheery rat-tat-tat-tat at my door, and in walks Mr. Dick St. Leger, looking as fresh as a daisy. I like him immensely, and yet, rather than see that boot of his, I could often find it in my heart to request him to remain outside.

"Of course, no allusion to the subject has passed between us. One day I did drop a hint of it to his sister shortly after his arrival, but was promptly snubbed by her. A pity? Did I think so? She couldn't see herself that it mattered in the least. He could do everything the same as any one else. Did I know that he was one of the best shots in Berkshire? Few people seemed even to notice now that he was lame at all. After this of course I said no more. If only one could shut one's eyes as easily as one can one's mouth! What our beauty, Miss Misselbrook, thinks on the subject is a source of no slight perplexity to me. At first her thoughts were evident enough, her face expressing not mere dismay but something like repulsion; before the end of the second day, however, it was evident to every one that the two young people had become the best friends possible. That Dick St. Leger admires the handsome Australian there can at least be no question, and he is evidently not of a nature to hide the flame of his admiration

under a bushel. ‘Wasn’t she a splendid girl? Wasn’t she magnificent?’ he used to ask me with his blue eyes wide with admiration, and his whole face glowing like a peony. He is evidently an enthusiastic and romantic young fellow, and this to me is part of his charm. To be enthusiastic and romantic at my age is natural enough, but to be romantic while you are young and curly is too much of a rarity nowadays not to be worth cherishing!

“The young people take long walks together, though how young St. Leger manages to get over the rough ground with that unlucky foot of his is a marvel to me. Bowls is the national recreation in this part of the country, and to this also they have taken keenly. His disabilities do not come against him there, and he is already, I am told, a distinguished proficient. They have even—ridiculous creatures—taken to playing at night by the light of lanterns, held by two of the superfluous hangers-on of the establishment. This evening they have been engaged in doing so upon the piece of grass immediately below my windows. I came in for quite a little scene in consequence, as you shall hear.

“Mrs. Eastgood had come into my room to borrow a leaf cutter, and we were discoursing together placidly, when a sudden shout of triumph drew us to the window. There, just below us, were the players, gathered into a knot, encircled by a ring of lookers-on, young St. Leger and Miss Misselbrook talking eagerly together, he apparently explaining something to her about the game, but his eyes lit up by a fire not entirely due, it seemed to me, to the fascinations of bowls.

“The same idea seemed to strike his sister, for she gave a sudden gasp of dismay, and grasped my arm.

“‘Oh, Lady Lynch, did you see that——?’

“‘See what, my dear?’

“‘That dreadful girl. I know she is trying to lead Dick on. She is making up to him. We must do something. We must get him away from her.’

“‘Upon my word, it seems to me, my dear, that it is your brother Dick who is making up to that girl,’ I said. ‘Surely you must have noticed how very attentive he has been to her of late?’

“‘Oh no, no, indeed, I’m sure it must be all her. I’m sure he wouldn’t think of such a thing.’

"‘Why not? Probably he has fallen in love with her.’

"‘In love! Oh, Lady Lynch, he mustn’t, mustn’t fall in love with her. Why, he might want next to *marry* her. A girl we know nothing about, whom no one in the county knows anything about. An Australian! I have always heard colonists are *so* objectionable. Oh, it is perfectly dreadful. What shall we do? What shall we do? I must do something.’

"‘Upon my word, my dear, you seem to forget that you have married for love yourself if it comes to that,’ I said rather tartly, for I did not at all enjoy the prospect of having my little romance cut short.

"‘I? Oh, but that was so different. Besides, we always knew all about Cyril from the beginning. Where is Cyril? I must go to him. I must ask him——’

"And off she ran to consult her parson. Post time.

"Ever your affectionate cousin,

"ARABELLA JANE LYNCH."

[The same to the same.]

"August 10th, 8.30 a.m.

"Such an excitement, my dear Ann, since I wrote last! However, I must begin properly at the beginning or you will never understand.

"I must tell you that ever since I have been at Gebenstal I have been intending to visit a lake, of which all the visitors, the German ones particularly, rave, and out of which come the excellent little trout which form the best item of the fare which our Eagle sets before us. Yesterday afternoon, feeling more energetically disposed than usual, I decided to undertake the walk. None of my young friends were visible when I sallied forth from the hotel, so I decided to proceed alone. It was an afternoon of unaccountable temper, at one moment calm and serene, at another breaking out into unaccountable little gusts of wind, accompanied with distant mutterings of thunder. After leaving the valley of Gebenstal one finds oneself almost immediately under the shadow of the mountains. The

rocks rose high above my head, higher, higher, higher, more like great sea cliffs than the usual sloping base of mountains. Sea cliffs, you must understand, four thousand, in some places five thousand feet high, the sort of sea cliffs which may exist in Saturn or Jupiter, if either of those superior planets possess oceans, but which certainly are not to be found upon this little ball of ours. Well, to continue, on I went, up and up, deeper and deeper into the ravine, which seemed to close in around me like some enchanted valley which forbade any future exit, the trees, too, shutting in the pathway, so that I could with difficulty push on. At last I came to the lake. Such a lake, my dear! In the centre of this tremendous gorge, inclosed and overlooked by this tremendous circumvallation of cliffs, lay—a pool, a puddle, a mere miserable little duck pond. It was such a lake as might have been made in any suburban paddock after a couple of nights' rain! I positively stood still and laughed, so ridiculous was the contrast between what I saw and what my imagination had previously conjured up. There were the fish, however, unmistakably, flopping about and whisking their tails derisively. Of course they had been put in by the landlord of the hotel, whose property the lake is, and whose guests entertain themselves by fishing in it. There was even a little house into which they—the guests, I mean, not the fish—could retire from the rain. I wondered that there was not a boat to row about in, though if there had been its prow would have touched the further bank while its helm still rested upon the nearer one! Being somewhat tired with my walk I went into the little house and sat down on a bench to rest myself. It was very warm and still, and sleepifying, and I suppose I must have gradually lapsed off into a doze, for I fancied that I was in a boat—that boat whose absence I had wondered at—and that in it were two other people besides myself whose voices I was listening to, and that one of the two was asking for something which the other declined to give, whereupon the first threatened to leap into the water. This effectually aroused me, and I found myself with my head jammed close against one of the wooden sides of the hut, and my bonnet pushed woefully out of shape. The voices were not imaginary, however, for I could hear them still going on somewhere not very far away. I was upon the point of getting up and going to the entrance, when my eye

was attracted to a little square aperture in the woodwork, through which I beheld what for the moment arrested my movement, namely, two faces—those of Miss Misselbrook and young St. Leger—reflected below me in the placid surface. There was nothing placid in the faces themselves, however. Both looked excited, young St. Leger flushed and angry, the girl had her dark eyes fixed with a resolute look upon the water. Evidently while I had slept there had been a scene. I was still looking when the young fellow suddenly turned away with a gesture of anger and mortification, turned sharp off to the right, and hurried as fast as he could down the path, quickly disappearing in the intricacies of the wood. The girl remained where she was for a moment, then sprang forward as if to stop him, and also immediately vanished among the trees. From the time I awoke to the time when they had both disappeared there could hardly have been three minutes.

I remained where I was for perhaps a quarter of an hour longer, thinking over what I had seen. Then I too followed in the same direction. If Miss Misselbrook intended to catch up her swain she had certainly not succeeded, for when I got through the wood and came out upon the open meadows beyond I could see her a good long way ahead of me walking alone in the direction of the hotel. A mist was beginning to rise and the mutterings of thunder had got louder. Before I was able to reach the hotel the mist had changed to rain, and there was every sign that a storm was brooding.

"I was a little late at the *table d'hôte*, as I had to change from head to foot, and when I got down I found that every one had assembled with the exception of young St. Leger, whose place between myself and Miss Misselbrook stood conspicuously empty. I cannot say I was surprised, for after what I had seen beside the lake it did not seem very likely that he would present himself immediately. His sister, however, was both surprised and disturbed, and kept up a ceaseless comment of wonder as to where he was and why he had remained out in the rain instead of coming to dinner. By the time that meal was over, the rain had become a downpour, and the claps of thunder followed one another almost without an interval; the fog, too, had thickened and there was every prospect of it getting worse as the night wore on. The poor little chaplainess was in a most distracted

state, running up and down the house, gazing out of every window, wringing her hands and declaring again and again that it was all the fault of that horrid girl; she must have frightened him into running away. He didn't know of any other way of escaping from her! I kept my opinion to myself, though privately I must own I was also somewhat alarmed at his non-appearance. We sat up, the chaplain and chaplainess and I, till about twelve o'clock, but at last we went to bed, for what else was there to do, seeing that none of us had an idea where he was?

"I slept at first, but after a while I awakened. A moon had risen, and through a gap in the curtain which Perkins had pinned over the window I could see a corner of one of the mountains, cold, naked and desolate-looking, encircled with dense masses of white fog which seemed clutching at it with fleecy fingers. I thought of young St. Leger, and shuddered at the possibility of his being stuck in some such place with that wretched foot of his, unable to get down, and calling, calling, vainly perhaps, for aid. The idea took such possession of me that presently I got up, wrapped a dressing-gown around me and went to the window. The rain had ceased, but the fog lay thick over the valley, covering the sides of the mountains, filling all the defiles and leaving here and there only a topmost peak visible. The path which led away from the hotel, and which I had followed the day before, was so obscured that the eye could only follow it a few yards away from the hotel. My eyes were fixed upon it when all at once it seemed to me that I saw something stirring, an indistinct white object moving along rapidly towards me. Another moment the fog divided, and to my intense astonishment I saw Miss Misselbrook coming out of the midst of it, flying rather, towards the house.

"Flinging open my window and leaning out I called to her by name.

"She stopped and looked up.

"Who is there? Lady Lynch! Thank goodness somebody is awake. He is up there. I heard him call from my window—an Australian coo-ey—it could be no one else. I dressed and ran out, but the fog is too thick. We must get lanterns. Call the others, please. Quick, quick!"

"I did not wait to hear more. I left the window, I flew to

the Eastgoods' room, which was opposite mine, and roused them, telling them that Dick was in the mountains, that they must go up to him with lanterns.

"In a minute every one was stirring. The chaplain came rushing along the passage in most un-parsonic attire, ran downstairs, and tugged away at the big bell that hangs at the gate. Soon lights were burning in every direction; all the hangers-on and half the guests of the establishment rushing out like ants suddenly disturbed. I put on a shawl and went down to the little *châlet* before described, which commands an uninterrupted view of the mountains. Some one was already standing there, a dark form with big gleaming eyes. I marched straight up to her and took her by the arm.

"'Will you answer me one question, Miss Misselbrook?' said I. Then without waiting for her to reply: 'What did you say to Dick St. Leger this afternoon by the lake, may I inquire?' I asked sternly.

'She started. 'How do you know . . . How—?'

"'Never mind how I know. What did you say to him, that is the question?'

"'He asked me to—to—'

"'To marry him—yes—yes—and you said—'

"'I said that I would, only that—that—'

"'That you didn't like his boot. Was that it?'

"'Ye—es.'

"'I thought as much. Do you suppose that he likes it himself?'

"'Of course not. But—'

"I did not wait for the rest of her explanation, but marched straight back to the hotel. I am very angry with her, the more so because to a great extent I sympathize. She feels as I feel, only I suppose more so. She likes him; I am sure she likes him; I believe she is in love with him; but she cannot make up her mind to—to put it coarsely—swallow his boot! I don't know, to tell the truth, that I could myself if I were a girl. And yet—I don't know. I am not sure. He is a dear fellow. Anyhow I wish with all my heart he would come back. This suspense is beginning to"

[The same to the same.]

" Postscript, 5 p.m.

". . . . This suspense, I was about to say, my dear Ann, was really beginning to be more than human flesh and blood could bear. Every one had left the hotel ; the Eastgoods, the landlord, the guides, the hangers-on of all sorts, even a considerable proportion of the guests. Miss Misselbrook, too, had disappeared, though she certainly did not go with the rest of the search party. I told myself that it was ridiculous for me to go. Far better remain and occupy myself intelligently until they returned. It was all very well, but it was impossible—impossible to read, impossible to write, impossible to do anything but put on my clogs and scuttle after the others. By this time it was broad daylight ; the sun had dispersed the mists, which still hung in ragged shreds about the base of the mountains, or floated like masses of gossamer along the steaming streaming edges of the valley. The others, I knew, had taken the direct way to the mountains. It was too steep for me, so I pursued the less perpendicular path, which led me along the edge of the stream up into the pine woods, and so up and up and up. How people ever become Alpine climbers is more, I own, than I can imagine. Do their hearts feel as if they were somewhere on the tops of their shoulders, and their lungs as if they were full of pins and needles, I wonder? Mine did on that occasion I know. I walked till I could literally walk no further. I was tired to death, and began to ask myself why I had been such a fool as to come. If the rest of the party with their ropes and their axes, their good legs and good lungs, had been unable all this time to find him, what likelihood was there of my doing so? I looked about for somewhere to rest, but not a spot could I find. Everything was soaking from the rain of the night before ; the very stones were steaming ; no one with the fear of rheumatism before their eyes could have ventured to seat themselves anywhere. I struggled on accordingly a little further, until I came to a place where the path forked, the wider part of it pointing straight up hill through the trees, the narrower less-frequented one leading away to the right where some huge blocks of stone gaped a little, and between which the path

ran. I remembered that there had been some talk of a cave in this direction, so concluded that what I saw before me was the entrance to it. Probably the rain had not penetrated in there, so that if I got in I might find somewhere to sit down, I thought, without actually imperilling my life. The entrance was very narrow, but I wriggled through as best I could dislodging a shower of small stones as I did so, some of which fell upon my feet and hurt considerably. I fancied I heard a sound of voices, but was too much occupied to pay any attention until I suddenly doubled the next angle of the winding pathway, when I stood still, petrified with astonishment. There, twenty yards ahead of me, stood the cause of all our anxieties, and with him, leaning against the wall of the cavern—Miss Misselbrook.

"I stood rooted to the ground. How had they got there? Had he found a shelter in that asylum during the night? When had she discovered him? Above all what, oh what, oh what would my little friend Mrs. Eastgood say?

"They were so occupied with one another that at first they remained utterly unconscious of my presence. Young St. Leger was the first to perceive me. With a start and a blush which made his foolish young face as red as a poppy, he came hobbling briskly towards me, his eyes literally leaping out of his head with excitement. And his first words were—well, what do you suppose they were? Come, guess! You don't care, you say; these people and their tiresome concerns are nothing to you. Oh, very well, if you don't care you shan't know. Good-bye.

"Your affectionate cousin,

"ARABELLA JANE LYNCH."

"My Trio."

By MARY HAMPDEN.

LORD HARRY LONGACRES' letter to me contained one passage of overwhelming interest, which ran as follows :

" Dear girl, I am convinced you and I could pull along famously together. If you think so too say 'Yes,' and you'll make me no end happy."

Sir Dorin D'Estcourt wrote less expressively, but his calligraphy was so handsome and the sentences were so neatly turned ! I quote an example :

" Now we have met, I feel that my existence can never be the same in your absence. Town is no longer interesting ; society palls because you are away. My dear Miss Allardyce, will you accept my devotion and bestow on me the treasure of your regard ? "

And then there remained one other letter—so short—from Cuthbert Banistor Bemmering, M.P. for Polltown :

" Regret missing you at Mrs. L——'s, but as you have left town, I have no alternative but to make my proposition through the post. I trust you are aware of my sentiments as regards yourself, so it only remains for me to ask you—Will you be my wife ? "

I am always frank, so I say at once that I liked those letters ; they represented the affection—true and sensible—of three nice men ; and a girl means so much by the word " nice ! " They would none of them be inconsolable ; they were one and all thoroughly in earnest. Now could there have been more satisfactory lovers ?

At the time when I received those letters the season was over—my first season in town. But it must not be imagined that I was young—not at all ; my father had been ten years in India, and I had passed through my schooldays only to take up a more severe course of study. It is a fact that I did not go to my first ball until I was twenty-seven ; but then I was B.A. of

Dublin University, had studied art in Rome, and—— Well, I will not make out a list of my attainments ; suffice it to say I knew myself to be tolerably educated, an heiress and a beauty !

I hope no one will be shocked by this confession, for I never heard that one should be ashamed of good looks, and I could not help knowing of mine, for every one complimented me, and no one oftener than my dear old father. "Dorothy, you look positively lovely to-night." "My darling, you're pretty enough to make sunshine on a dull day." These were the sweet speeches he made me by the hour, and I don't think they made me vain —on the contrary, I forgot about my own appearance because I had no need to remember it.

Some girls might have fancied that those letters had been dictated by mercenary motives, but I never had the least fear on the subject. It is a theory of mine that the unpleasant people of the world are on the surface, clearly visible to the careful eye, but the good lie hidden in the deep pools and need to be searched for. That is why so many cynics flourish in society, because they teach merely superficial opinions of humanity, and their lazy listeners are pleased to adopt their notion that all are alike bad, because it saves the trouble of discrimination.

I knew my three gentlemen, at least, were true-hearted and honourable. Perhaps I had better describe them in a few words.

Lord Harry Longacres was a great merry sportsman. He always looked lost in a ball-room, because he had to part with "Bolt," an untidy, long-eared water spaniel, who was his constant companion ; but he was seen at his best in the Row, riding an immense roan and followed by quite half-a-dozen dogs of different sizes. On such occasions he dressed in light colours—grey usually—his face appearing ruddy by contrast, his overhanging moustache a cheerful auburn.

Sir Dorin D'Estcourt was tall and thin ; a nervous, fair-haired man, with solemn grey eyes, a habit of constantly stroking the fringe on his upper lip, and a hesitating manner. He was capable of making very graceful speeches, but always required to think them out first ; and as he never smiled or varied his expression of polite boredom, it was difficult to understand how much or how little he was meaning.

Mr. Banistor Bemmering was a different man to either of the others. For him life was a series of contested elections, where

good fortune came out at the head of the poll only in response to energetic wire-pulling. He disliked most sports, objected to racing on principle, wore severely plain clothes, and was never known to indulge in a flower in his button-hole. He affected the dress and bearing of an earlier period — old-fashioned, sombre, but distinguished. Lord Harry was thirty-five, Sir Dorin barely thirty, but Mr. Bemmering was at least forty. A rising young politician, his friends called him, and after the manner of political men, he thought himself a great celebrity. His opinions, when he gave them, were in good taste and definite ; his approval was hard to win by either man or woman, so I felt flattered to have gained it ; and the epithet by which he expressed dislike to any one or anything was "trying." I heard him speak once in the House, and he described the conduct of honourable gentlemen opposite as "trying," and the mild rebuke called forth many a wince which a stronger word would not have provoked. I need only add that his face had an unmistakably legal air of reserve—he spoke so little, and he knew so much !

As soon as I had read and considered those letters, which, strange to say, all arrived on the same day, I took them to my father to ask his opinion. I found him sitting bareheaded on a garden seat, enjoying the sunshine and smoking his favourite meerschaum. We had no estate in England, but had taken Deep Dale Abbey at my request. It was a regular old ruin, five miles from the station, and hidden from a road which nobody traversed by a belt of lime and alder trees.

"Which of these men do you love, Dorothy, darling ?"

"Daddy," I cried, "I've only met them in the gay and giddy throng, and I don't know. I'm greatly touched by the reflection that they care for me, and I do think it wouldn't be right to refuse any one of them !"

"I should have thought that was rather awkward, but you are so clever. What is the use of asking me ?"

"Because I like to tell you everything. Dad, I can't accept any man's offer until I am sure that he is more than a capital waltzer or a first-rate amateur actor ; even playing the banjo is not sufficient to my mind. My idea of a husband is one who would be happy at home, who could occupy himself in leisure minutes with some other interest than the everlasting billiards

and cigars. No, don't put out your pipe, you foolish old dear ; you have worked all your life, and now you have a right to smoke. But do you understand what I mean ?"

"I think so, Dora. But what are you going to do?"

"I have a plan. You must ask them all three down here, where there is no shooting or fishing, five miles from a village, the post and the morning papers always late, and no one to call upon. Then, dad, there'll be a fine chance to find out whether their tempers are good, whether they are companionable and have nice domesticated ways."

My father let his pipe fall, he was so much surprised at my proposition ; then at last he murmured admiringly :

"Dorothy, you are a wonderful girl ! What a plan ! No one but you would have thought of it. But there is just one question : when you choose, what shall I do with the two left ? I don't want them to accuse you of having broken their hearts."

"Oh, daddy, I shall be on the watch. I won't let any of them do that. You will write to them all for me that I do not feel able to reply definitely at once, then your invitation follows."

"You come and tell me what to say, dear."

Between us we soon finished the three short letters : with the exception of the names and addresses they were all exactly alike.

Needless to say the gentlemen each agreed to come for a visit, and I must own to feeling rather excited on the day of their arrival.

Such a day it was too. Rain, rain, nothing but rain. Over-head a leaden sky ; underfoot, mud, country mud. The road from the station was bowered by branches ; these were dripping. The ruinous old house was enveloped in a damp fog, and there was not one cheerful object in the landscape. I really pitied the three travellers. Deep Dale Abbey did not look inviting on this occasion.

Lord Harry was the first to arrive. He came in the morning, and seemed positively cheerful ; it was quite a relief to hear his hearty voice.

"How d'you do, Miss Allardyce ? How are you, colonel ? By Jove, that little mare of yours went like the wind."

When he had an opportunity to speak to me alone he took both my hands and gave them an energetic squeeze.

"So you couldn't make up your mind to take me. Well, I don't know that I'm surprised, but if you ever like me well enough I shall be a lucky fellow. I'm not going to bore you while I'm here, but we'll be jolly good friends, won't we? And if only this confounded rain will hold up to-morrow we'll go a canter round the country."

Sir Dorin D'Estcourt came in the afternoon, in time for dinner. I thought he looked at me a little reproachfully, but it may have been my fancy. He too held my hand for several minutes, but I did not think much of that because I knew he was preparing a pretty speech.

"I hoped I might come to meet a welcome even more charming than the one you have accorded me, Miss Allardyce, but a man always finds satisfaction in bowing before a lady's wishes. If you want time to reflect over my proposal, Heaven forbid that I should try to hurry you."

That was very nice of him, I thought; and he really did look mournful.

Mr. Banistor Bemmering arrived late in the evening.

"My dear Miss Allardyce," he exclaimed, "I would have come earlier, but public business prevented me. With your kind indulgence I will address you on a subject which is very near my heart. I am to understand that you do not reject me?"

"I cannot answer you yet," I replied, "but I will do so as soon as I am able."

"Thank you. At the earliest possible opportunity. While regretting that circumstances should have arisen which——"

But no need to repeat his remarks. Mr. Bemmering had resumed his parliamentary manner, and delivered a very wordy, if not a mighty, speech; he had learned in a good school how to cover an awkward situation with respectable phrases.

I really think the Clerk of the Weather must have been in sympathy with my plot. It rained; oh, how it did rain. The first day Lord Harry spent most of his time in the stables; Mr. Bemmering wrote a political essay in the library; Sir Dorin wound a skein of wool for me, and then did nothing. But it was too soon to do more than observe; I formed no conclusions.

Then came Sunday. I saw that they went to church, but when we had driven home they all wore long faces.

However, it was so wet that I forgave them.

We sat in the drawing-room and talked. Lord Harry recounted his adventures in last year's hunting fields; Sir Dorin propounded a bad joke now and again, which had the effect of making him very grave; and Mr. Bemmering discussed the tithes question at great length. I contrived to get him into a debate, but he argued so sweetly that he seemed scarcely to care which side won.

So the week passed. Of course there were some fine days, and we rode, walked and drove, but in the intervals the gentlemen had to be content with scant amusement. An occasional rubber at whist was the only recreation we tolerated, father and I.

They must have been dreadfully bored; but, to do them justice, they tried their best not to show it; so when a fortnight had elapsed I determined to bring matters to a crisis by a leading question.

It was another wet day, about the tenth out of fourteen, without a glimmer of sunlight, and finding Lord Harry looking disconsolately out of window, I asked carelessly:

"What are you thinking of doing this evening?"

"I can't imagine!"

"The hours pass rather slowly, don't you think they do?"

"Yes, indeed," he answered hastily; "there is never anything to be done this wretched weather—— I have an idea I'd better be off, Miss Allardyce. I'm awfully sorry, but I don't think I can please you; I haven't got a lot of intellect, you know."

"And you find life stupid in a dull country house?"

"I could never find any place stupid where you were—by Jove, I couldn't."

But I was satisfied that *his* heart would not break at any rate, so I let him go.

I could not feel very angry with Sir Dorin, because, although he wore a doleful do-nothing air, he bore with the weather most patiently.

"I'd just as soon be indoors as out; while we have the pleasure of your society all surroundings are alike to me," he replied, in answer to my inquiries.

I had grown to like Sir Dorin since his arrival at Deep Dale Abbey; he was always gentle, considerate, and impressed me with a good opinion of his temper.

He did not make a noticeable figure in society, for his retiring .

disposition allowed him to get lost in a manner which had prevented us from being better friends; but in a lonely drawing-room on a wet day he was a satisfactory conversationalist so long as he had the field to himself. When the other gentlemen entered he relapsed into silence, or merely added a word here and there to their discussions.

"Have you made up your mind yet, Dorothy, darling?" my dear old father asked me next morning. "Lord Harry has gone, and Sir Dorin is going, so I suppose the choice falls on Cuthbert Bemmering?"

"Sir Dorin going?" I exclaimed in a voice of dismay. "The deceitful man. Just as I had begun to fancy his quiet ways. Daddy, they are all alike, selfish to a degree. Yes, I believe the politician has come first through the ordeal; but then he would always be happy if he were allowed to air his opinions, and when he is silent I know he is only preparing his next address to his constituents. Where is Sir Dorin going?—and when?"

"I think he must have gone, Dorothy. He sent me word quite early that he was running up to town for a day or two, but hopes to return here."

Town! The old story! He could not be contented in a picturesque romantic spot like Deadwold! He could not relinquish his club even for a fortnight! My conscience reproached me a little when I remembered the weather, and looked out of the window upon another soaking dreary day, but I determined to be very cold and distant with Sir Dorin if he returned. Mr. Bemmering was the last of my trio, and even he deserted me.

"Public business" called him away at once, and when he remarked dogmatically, "I am convinced, Miss Allardyce, that it is a fatal mistake for any man to refuse to recognize defeat; I fear you are not willing to entertain my offer," I did not think that he, either, was broken-hearted.

My dear old father was very patient with me when we were left alone together. I did have a foolish cry, though I did not know what it was about then.

"Daddy, you are the nicest man in the world," I cried, "and we will never be parted—never!"

Deep Dale Abbey looked so much better after one day's sunshine. The paths had been swept and rolled, the laurels

trimmed, and there was quite a wealth of flowers in the garden. I felt sorry the old place had been so dreary when my trio of guests had seen it. True, Sir Dorin D'Estcourt returned with the sunshine, but he did not deserve to witness the improvement.

"I hope you enjoyed your visit to town," I said icily. "How is everything looking, and what is the news?"

"I only passed through on my way to Dorin Hall; I did not stay to see or hear anything. As I told you in my letter, Miss Allardyce, society palls in your absence."

"You did not find Deep Dale enlivening. You were obliged to fly from it for relaxation."

"I went to fetch this. Do you remember when I told of the white sapphire which had been in our family for ages, you told me you had never seen one? May I venture to hope that you will honour me by accepting it?"

I took the ring in my hand and turned it about, ostensibly to admire the beautiful gem, but in reality I was thinking of the giver.

How could I have doubted him? How could I ever have thought his face had only one expression of polite boredom? As I glanced timidly up into his eyes, I found them very eloquent.

"You have not repented of your letter then, Sir Dorin?"

"No, Miss Allardyce, I shall never do that."

"You have not been very dull this last fortnight?"

"I have been anxious—that was all. I could always be fond of home life if you were its presiding genius. I would do my best to understand art, literature, and music for your sake, and I know you would try to take a little interest in my less intellectual recreations. Will you let me place my ring upon your finger, Dorothy?"

"Yes," I answered. "I feel now that I have been too exacting. I will not ask you to spend hours watching the rain through drawing-room windows, Sir Dorin!"

* * * * *

"So you've learned to love one of your three suitors, darling?" said my father when I told him all about it. "I'm very glad to hear it, for Sir Dorin is the best of the trio!"

And I agreed to his opinion like a dutiful daughter.

Winter Shadows.

By W. W. FENN.

WITH daylight at a premium for a month or two, and with the shadow of winter enfolding these northern latitudes in its solemn pall, one is forcibly reminded of Scott's lines—

“When dark December glooms the day,
And takes our autumn joys away ;
When short and scant the sunbeam throws
Upon the weary waste of snows
A cold and profitless regard,
Like patron on a needy bard ;”—

for it is thus that the great Magician of the North sounds the keynote of the situation.

If the actual month of December be not always with us, and we are not always visited with a snowfall when the days are actually at their very shortest, it makes little difference to the sentiment of the period. Deep winter time brings enough climatic unpleasantness to be covered by the poetic description. The poet's lines go on, of course, to point the contrast which the interior of our dwellings affords to the gloomy aspect of the skies, and things generally beyond four walls. Whether in town or country, it is mainly the season for indoors, and the picture the poet conjures up of a sportsman's snug parlour is, again, equally applicable in its sentiment to what everybody feels. It signifies little how our own immediate surroundings may differ from those of the country gentleman ; we can descry in the details of his abode precisely those domestic instincts which animate us all. To adopt, for instance, as strong a contrast as may be, we should find in the lady's *boudoir* under similar circumstances the same atmosphere of thought and sensation, the same love of home with its warmth and comfort, the same inclination to employ our minds and hands with anything which can be done indoors. “Guns, fishing rods, and spears,” may not decorate our walls, rough terriers and sporting dogs may not

cumber our hearth, even as we say snow may not impede our communications with the outer world, but we find the equivalents for these details in some shape or other. Pictures, busts, knick-knacks, and objects of art generally, supply the place of the sportsman's gear ; the purring puss-cat, or the comical pug, represent pretty forcibly the sentiment of pets and the friends which man delights to find in so-called dumb creatures ; possibly we have the actual counterpart of the steed in his stall eating his head off. The spirit of these things is present with the additional advantages which modern progress has put at our command since the days when the Master of Abbotsford wrote the introduction to the fifth canto of "Marmion."

There is no necessity now for our "conning o'er the newspage" more than once for lack of fresh intelligence as he describes, nor is the post usually long delayed by any stress of weather. The water companies have effectually prevented any need for turning out to the spring, and housewives are in a measure not dependent for their supplies upon "snow-impeded wains." Hence there is no difference in the regard we pay to the allurements of home. Still, winter-time out of doors to the robust or even fairly healthy has plenty of attractions, and as an able writer on social topics has said when referring to the season in town, "If the weather prove really 'seasonable,' it is in sympathy with English constitutions and tastes. Bright, crisp frost raises the spirits, and sets the blood in healthier circulation by provoking brisk exercise. Nor does London ever look much better than when, in a dry clear December, its noble thoroughfares are thronged with people and such a procession of equipages as astonishes our visitors from abroad. It is a season of social activity, of gaiety of all kinds, and cordial Christmas observances."

Naturally, the medal has its reverse, and when that reverse is unduly prolonged, as is too frequently the case, there will be considerable grumbling heard, even indoors, whatever are the attractions to be found there. Being Britons, this must be the case, of course ; but when the fit of discontent has passed, no harm is done, and the best way to put a check upon it is to try and remember what rare spells of lovely weather are often vouchsafed to us far into the autumn. Meanwhile, if we are obliged to remain at home day after day through stress of weather—and a good many of us would look upon such a fate as far from a hard-

ship, by the way—why, there is in London not a little amusement to be had from the moving panorama in the streets on a wet or snowy day. Given a favourable situation for our house, and supposing we are inclined to diversify our indoor occupations by an occasional idle for ten minutes by looking out of window, there are sights constantly presenting themselves from which many lessons may be extracted. From a comfortable corner on the window seat we may, as from a private box at the play, observe the exciting drama of life, having all our emotions stirred in their turn. Nowhere can we get a more comprehensive view of the curious and amusing spectacle. Albeit the leading feature of it appears at the first blush to be commonplace, and to exhibit chiefly the shifts and expedients mankind resorts to when in contention with the hostility of the elements, there is a good deal more to be seen, if we look below the surface. For the moment, no doubt, it seems men and women alike are possessed by one dominating desire. But in reality there is much more. How not to get wet is the problem they are all bent on solving, save some few who have given it up as hopeless, and go about taking apparently no more heed of the drenching rain than they would of a buzzing fly or two. These, the forlorn and miserable for the most part, recognize the impossibility of keeping dry under the circumstances of their "looped and windowed raggedness." Thus pathos and humour at once tread fast upon each other's heels, whilst stern worldly indifference passes on, regardless of either. Not unfrequently our hearts may be wrung by the sight of some poor ill-clad workwoman, perhaps with a baby nestling in her bosom, wending her way through the jostling indifferent crowd ; her flimsy, meagre shawl, insufficient at the best to protect herself, drawn to its utmost stretch across her tender charge. Wet through she must be we know, for she has no umbrella, as of course also must be the little chap clinging to her skirts and struggling at a trot by her side. Our deepest pity goes forth to her even as we watch her from a distance, but when she is near enough, and we catch a hurried glimpse of that pale, pinched, careworn face, we are almost impelled to open the window and call after her to come inside and dry herself and have something to eat. But she is gone in a moment—the great seething sea of humanity has swallowed her up, even as the mighty ocean would a "waif and stray" piece of wreckage, for verily is she not one in

the bitterest sense of the term?—battered, splintered fragment from the great ship of life?—thrown overboard, cast away, and if not actually doomed to sink immediately, yet we feel that this can only be a question of time. Down she must go, if one can so speak of anything which has never been “up.”

When the shadows of winter fall on such too frequent sights in the thoroughfares of London, they become additionally pathetic, and were it not that the comic element of the streets is for ever inextricably woven in with the sadder hues, we could hardly bear to linger at the window with any idea of being diverted by the significant panorama passing before us. Indeed, as it is, we have idled there sufficiently for to-day, and had better return to our “books and work, and healthful play.” Imprisonment within doors may, however, become less irksome to us since our glimpse of life outside, in which case time will not have been entirely wasted. In this respect, a residence in town has its advantages; for albeit the country offers many an enchanting prospect during sunny hours in winter, yet these are so brief and rare, and the preponderance of gloom and shadow is so great, that there is little hope of the home-imprisoned finding relief even by a passing glance beyond the threshold.

My Love of a Year.

I LOVED her through a summer bright,
As summers were of old ;
Through a winter that without her
Had dreary seemed and cold.
I loved her for her perfect form,
Her lovely head and face ;
Above all, perhaps, I loved her
For her courage and her grace.

I loved the shapely limbs that told
The secret of her sire ;
Those large, full sparkling eyes that spoke
Of gentleness and—fire !
She trod the earth as tho' she were
The “Lady of the Land”—
My “Gladys !” formed to win all hearts,
And, when “won,” to “command.”

She ran away with me at last,
She took the fateful leap,
Which many a strong man shudders at,
Which makes weak woman weep.
I ceased to love her quite as well,
For all her beauty rare,
When she nearly killed me at the bank
My lovely chestnut mare !

ANNIE THOMAS.

A Buried Sin.

CHAPTER I.

THE MASTER OF KENT HOUSE.

KENT HOUSE had only been built a few years, and still looked brand-new from attic to basement. It was massive, square, and strong ; some people said it was like a cubic piece cut off from a barrack ; others, when speaking to the owner and wishing to combine truth with compliment, called it a fine, solid, substantial place, and the local paper described it as "Mr. Kent's elegant mansion"—all of which epithets were pleasing in the owner's ears. It stood on the hillside, and enjoyed an extensive view of hill and valley, well-wooded home-scenery, for miles around. It was built of the brightest of red brick, picked out with white, and had large plate-glass windows, and mostly white blinds ; the general effect on a sunny summer day was really dazzling. The master of the house, Mr. Kent, was his own architect, and he had resolved that Kent House should be large, light and airy. He did not care for architectural ornament, or what he called "spidery twisting and twirling decorations with no sense in 'em." He considered turrets affected and gables a sheer waste of space ; he liked everything solid, strong and lasting—and so he had it !

The windows on the ground floor opened on to a wide terrace walk, with steps leading down across the smooth lawn, beyond which lay the garden, which was laid out in what seemed to be wild confusion, though in reality it was carefully planned according to the taste of its owner. He who supplied the sinews of war thought he had a right to arrange the campaign according to his own fashion, and he didn't see why fruits and flowers shouldn't grow together ; he was used to having his own way and determined to throw them into close companionship. A currant bush was as good as a rose tree—better, for it was more useful ; so the kitchen, the flower garden and the orchard were mixed together in what appeared to be "most admired confusion," and presented a novel though by no means unpleasant picture. It is

true, the mixing together of this ungenial family had its drawbacks ; the lily objected to its neighbour the gooseberry bush ; the crimson roses paled and faded in the shadow of a row of plum trees ; and the white apple blossoms lay like a shroud of snow upon a world of tender buds before they had strength to blow. So, in the struggle for life, one killed the other. It was like the bringing together of an antagonistic human family and expecting them to bear the flower of peace. Well, Mr. Kent drove his gardeners mad and wasted his money, but that was his business. When one of his floral family failed he planted another, determined to force his fancy till he won success.

The furniture of the house was as heavy as its architecture ; the æsthetic goddess of grace fled from it in despair. There were capacious sofas, easy chairs in plenty, all upholstered in bright crimson velvet, and heavy curtains to the windows ; nothing light or airy anywhere. "The world must take me as they find me," the master of the house used to say ; "I like comfort, a fig for ornament and show !" It never struck his enlightened mind that he might combine the two. The waste of money and want of taste shocked the feelings of the more cultivated, but as he was rich and hospitable they accepted him all the same.

Reginald Kent was one of the family of self-made men, and by sheer pluck, shrewdness, and energy had fought his way while yet in the early prime of life to the top of the ladder, whereon he now triumphantly stood. From being an employé in the factory about four miles distant he had climbed into the favour of his master, who being an old man gradually dropped out of the business, left Mr. Kent as overseer, then took him into partnership, and in the end died and left him master of the concern. Kent had good business faculties, he had also good luck, indeed it might be said that everything he touched seemed to turn to gold.

In the library, surrounded by tall oak bookcases filled with handsomely-bound books that were never read, sat Mrs. Kent, mother of the master of the house. She was knitting a pair of socks for her son, the chief days of her life being occupied in supplying her Reginald with this necessary article of his attire. At the present moment she had a thought above stockings, she had let her folded hands fall into her lap, and was gazing out upon the landscape with eyes that saw not. Although she was far beyond the prime of life, she looked considerably younger

than her years. Her hair was only slightly tinged with grey, her eyes were as bright as ever, and her complexion as ruddy as an apple, but there was a somewhat hard look about her mouth, a restless anxiety in her eye. She looked as though she had gone through a world of trouble before she reached her present pinnacle of greatness and could wear rustling silks and a gold chain about her neck as thick as her little finger. Her reverie was broken by the entrance of her son. He came into the room like the breezy breath of a strong north-easter, his ruddy countenance clothed in smiles, his limbs sheathed in a brand-new suit of tweeds of a large plaid pattern, of which gold and green were the dominant colours ; not, perhaps, the most becoming costume, as like Hamlet he was "fat, and scant of breath."

" Didn't expect to see me, mother, eh ? " he said, in answer to her inquiring look.

" No, indeed," she answered ; " it isn't like you to take two holidays in one week."

" No. I think I do apply myself too much to business," he answered, pleased that she should note the fact.

" But remember," she added, " the eye of the master doeth more than the hand of the servant."

" That's true," he rejoined ; " but the most wide-awake master must indulge in forty winks sometimes."

" Ah ! Regy ; if *you* would only wink in the right direction ! " she said, shaking her head with a deprecating look.

" Yes, but the right direction for one is the wrong direction for another. I don't think we two should ever agree on that point."

" I suppose you are going down to the Blaines' ? "

" You suppose right," he answered, and there was a sort of covert defiance in his tone ; " there's another tennis party on."

" Well," she observed suspiciously, " I think—but of course they have an object in it—they always seem to be having tennis parties ! "

" Never one too many, mother," he replied ; " to my mind, they don't come round often enough."

" Humph ! " she said, with an aggravating look and accent which jarred upon his not over-sensitive nerves.

" I think I'm very well able to paddle my own canoe," he said, in answer to her unuttered thought

"The cleverest sometimes paddle into muddy waters."

"I've kept pretty well in mid-stream so far," he answered, "and I'll tell you what, mother, if I could get Ruth Levison to paddle with me, I should be the happiest man in England."

"Ah!" exclaimed Mrs. Kent, almost under her breath, "that is what I have always dreaded."

"Why, what have you against her?" he said sharply.

"Everything! In the first place, I could never receive her. As you know, I have an antipathy to Jews."

"I haven't," he answered stolidly. "A good Jew is better than a bad Christian any day. There is no reason why——"

"There is every reason why you should *not* marry a woman like Ruth Levison," interrupted Mrs. Kent.

"I don't know of one," he said curtly.

"Regy, my dear son!" she exclaimed, rising from her chair and laying her hand upon his shoulder; "I am more ambitious for you than you are for yourself. You have fought your way so far; you are a rich and a popular man; why shouldn't you stand for the next election and get into Parliament?"

"And like the ambitious frog, swell till I bust!" he laughed. "No, no, mother! I'd never cast an eye in that direction. There are enough asses to bray in the House without adding my heehaw!"

"At any rate," rejoined Mrs. Kent impatiently, "when you marry you should choose a woman of good family, who could help you to rise in the world."

"I don't want to take a header over my wife's shoulders."

"You would have no difficulty," she continued, without heed-ing his interruption; "there are scores of women of noble and aristocratic families whom you could have for the asking."

"I don't want to buy an article of that sort. No doubt it would be easy enough to find a fine lady who would condescend to spend my money and look down upon the man who made it. Not for Joe!" he added, shaking his head. After a moment's pause, he asked more seriously:

"Why are you so set against Ruth? You know nothing about her."

"I know she is the daughter—but there!" she added abruptly, "never mind whose daughter she is."

"I don't," he answered; "if she was the daughter of a chimney

sweep she would still be 'Ruth' to me—the best and most beautiful woman in the world."

"A man of your age ought to talk more sense—such twaddle! 'The best and most beautiful women' have managed to ruin men very cleverly before now. I want you to look at things in a practical, common-sense light. Now Ruth Levison has no family, no fortune, she may be handsome in her way, but she's a long way past her youth."

"She's not a day over six-and-twenty!" protested Miss Levison's admirer warmly.

"Bah!" said his mother, continuing as though his protest merited no more notice. "And though they live on such friendly terms, she is only a sort of governess-companion at the Blaines'. I believe she even receives a salary!"

"A good job she has brains enough to earn it," he observed. "It is no use talking, mother, we are playing a game of ninepins; as fast as you set up an argument against Ruth, I knock it down with another. If I can get Ruth, I mean to have her!" he added, decidedly.

"No fear of that!" said Mrs. Kent, in acrimonious accents; "you have only got to ask and have! When did a Jew refuse to barter anything for money? Why, they'd sell their souls for a bag of gold and throw their poor bodies into the bargain!"

"So far as that goes," rejoined her son, "I don't know that there is much difference between Jews and Christians. We are all as God made us. But as regards Ruth, you are 'frighting yourself with false fire,' mother; however much I may care for *her*, I don't know that she cares a jot for me!"

"That won't matter; she'll care fast enough for your money, if not for you."

"We shall see."

"My dear boy, you know I am only anxious for your good," she rejoined with a desponding sigh; "and you know that my life is very precarious. My heart is terribly affected, and my liver altogether wrong—indeed, suffering as I do from such a complication of diseases, I may go under any day."

"Oh, come! I say, mother! you've suffered from a complication of diseases ever since I was born, any one of 'em enough to kill any ordinary Christian right off."

"Ah! you laugh now, as you always do, when I speak of my ailments," she answered reproachfully, "but a day will come!"

"A good many days, I hope," he interrupted; "but bless you, if it gives you pleasure to have a complication of horrors, enjoy 'em! I don't mind, so long as you remain the same kind, good old mother you've always been to me!" and he put his arm round her and gave her a sounding kiss as he spoke.

"The worry of housekeeping is getting too much for me, Regy," she said, somewhat mollified; "it is time that I took a back seat, and you brought a younger mistress home."

"That is exactly what I'm wanting to do," he answered; "only the mistress must be one of my own choosing, mind that! I know there's plenty of nice girls cruising around, as pretty as wax dolls and just about as companionable, that is not the sort of thing I want. If I have an opportunity, I shall speak to Ruth this very day!"

"You've said nothing as yet!" exclaimed his mother eagerly. "Not compromised yourself in any way?"

"If you call it compromising to let a woman know you're fond of her—in fact, dote upon the ground she walks on—I fancy that I've compromised myself pretty well, but *she* don't seem to see it."

"I wish these Blaines had never come to Walmerstown!" exclaimed Mrs. Kent. "I feel that they've brought a world of trouble in their train; but it's fate—I suppose it's fate," she added, almost under her breath. "Regy," she added, after a moment's pause, "I suspect there's something queer about these Blaines. Who is that old lady who keeps in such seclusion, and is never seen except at church?"

"That's a very good place to be seen at, isn't it?"

"You don't understand. I don't think you ought to be getting on such intimate terms with people you know so little about. I'm sure they've got a skeleton in the house somewhere."

"Suppose they have—provided they keep it under lock and key, I don't see that it is any concern of ours. It is not fair to surmise things about people. Suppose any one should start a report that *you* had a skeleton hidden away among your own dead years!"

"Who dares say that?" exclaimed Mrs. Kent, with startling energy, clutching the arms of her chair and half rising from her seat. "Who dares to slander me in the sight of my own son?"

Her face turned absolutely livid, and she trembled from head to foot. Amazed at this sudden outburst, for which he could see no reason, her son stared at her in silent bewilderment! She went on, in incoherent anger, "Who dares accuse me? Let them come face to face, not go behind my back and slander me to my own son. You ought to be ashamed to hear your mother's character blackened, and her good name trodden under foot!"

"Had she gone suddenly mad?" he wondered. As soon as he recovered from his bewilderment, he exclaimed:

"My dear mother, what on earth are you going on in this wild way for? No one has ever said or hinted anything about you! Is it likely they would to *me*? Besides, what is there to say? Of all people in the world, you are the least likely to suffer from spiteful slanders."

"There is no one above the reach of evil tongues," she answered, her wrath quieting down almost as quickly as it had been raised. "What made you say what you did about skeletons?"

"Why, I only meant to show that what you say of other people they might, with just as much reason, say of you. You are too thin-skinned, mother, I've noticed that in you before—'frighted with false fire,' as the fellow says in the play. On the slightest possible ground you fancy people suspect you of something though the Lord knows why you should!"

"I suppose it is being so much alone makes me feel things so," she answered calmly.

"You feel things when there's nothing to be felt," he grumbled; "and as for being so much alone, it is all your own fault. You could mix with your neighbours pleasantly enough if you liked, but you are so unsociable."

"The people here are too fine folk for me; they wouldn't care for my company, nor I shouldn't care for theirs. We've been brought up in different worlds. You can't teach a chick to swim in its old age. My only thought is for you, Regy, now. You are sociable enough for two! and so that you are happy, I am content."

After a few more words from the genial-hearted Reginald, mother and son parted. She watched him across the lawn with closed lips and puckered brows—and still stood watching long after he had disappeared, and repeated his words over again.

"'Frighted with false fire,' he said, and it is true! but though

it has smouldered for so many years, it may burst out any day ; and then—and then—he would kill me if he knew ! He is so proud ! ”

CHAPTER II.

THE BREAKING-UP OF THE TENNIS PARTY.

MRS. BLAINE had taken possession of “The Friars,” and intended to remain there all the summer.

It was a grand old house, gaunt and grey now, for time was beginning to tell upon it, cutting deep furrows on its once noble front, crumbling its ornamental stone-work and tweaking the noses of its commemorative saints till they came off, artfully hiding the mutilations beneath the innocent-looking ivy, which crept into the interstices and covered every crack and cranny with its shining green leaves, so clothing the whole with living beauty. Something of its old monastic days seemed to cling about “The Friars” still. The ghosts of the dead years could not rest in their graves, but lingered brooding over their old home—a voiceless, viewless presence shadowing it everywhere.

It was quite the show-place of the neighbourhood, much to the disgust of Mr. Kent, who had a contempt for “these rubbishy old houses,” and thought that his big brand-new mansion ought to be the attraction ; “what people could see in these mouldy old places he could not understand.” Still, they came from far and near to have a glimpse of the romantic old Friars, and organized picnic parties in the woods near by.

The position of The Friars was isolated, low-lying upon shelving ground sloping towards the sea. During the winter months it was left very much to itself ; but for the last two years Mrs. Blaine had occupied it for the summer time. She got it for a mere song, as few people cared to live there, it was so lonely ; besides, it had the reputation of being haunted ; but she was above what she called “idle superstitions,” and believing that the best mode of purifying the ghostly atmosphere was the importation of healthy young life into its midst, came thither early in May, and brought two bright young girls, her niece and daughter, in her train, whose flying feet and cheerful voices chased the echoes into their gloomy corners, and filled the place with exuberant young life. Although they seldom had visitors staying in

the house, and, as Mrs. Kent had hinted, very little was known about them in the neighbourhood, yet there was no lack of society and amusement for the girls during their summer season at The Friars. Although it had few of what is called modern conveniences, Mrs. Blaine contrived to make it comfortable and homelike. She shut off that portion of the house she did not care to use, and transformed the rest into cosy nooks and corners bright with flowers and sunshine; and was always hospitably ready to make her neighbours welcome—a privilege of which especially the masculine members of Walmerstown society were not slow to avail themselves, as "Mrs. Blaine's girls," Dolly and Claire, were both pretty and popular.

It was a glorious June day, and the Blaines were giving one of their series of tennis parties; for, in spite of its isolation, The Friars was a tempting rallying point; the young folk thought nothing of tramping or driving four or five miles for a rollicking good game at tennis. In the distance, the great billows could be seen rolling in, shimmering green in the sunlight, kissing the land with white foam lips and whispering secrets which the land told not again.

The grounds of The Friars stretched almost to the water's edge; a low stone wall kept off the encroachments of the sea; the gradual slope was covered with brushwood and straggling bushes, a wild weedy expanse, creeping upward till it reached the garden, still wild, yet more cultivated, with tall hollyhocks and sunflowers standing stiff and strong in their scentless beauty; while nearer the house great beds of geraniums and fuchsias, with borders of old-fashioned southern-wood and bushes, covered with roses red and white, held their place among a wealth of humble sweet-smelling flowers; a very wilderness it was of bright colours and sweet odours—a far more pleasant place to wander in than the trimly-kept garden, where no sweet wild flower dare show its simple face. A broad expanse of smooth-shaven lawn was marked out for the season into tennis courts, where a party of young people were now hard at work with bat and ball, playing with all their might.

If you want to see a young man at his best, watch him at his favourite game; the dress is more becoming than the stereotyped suit of funereal black, crowned with the hideous chimney-pot of civilization; the light loose suit, well-fitting enough to allow the limbs free play, with no starching nor stiffening anywhere, shows

off his figure at its best, and, as he catches the flying ball, with all his senses on the alert, keen of eye, swift of foot, he makes a healthful picture of strong young manhood.

The girls, too, in their characteristic costumes, add a charming feature to the animated scene—their cheeks aglow, their laughing eyes beaming beneath the coquettish hats, but with no thought of coquetry in their minds, as they flash hither and thither, watching with eager eyes the flight of their ball as though it was the ball of destiny they were trying to send to some special goal.

The young folks went at it with such zest and earnestness on this sunny day, they might have been playing the game of life—as, indeed, perhaps they were, playing it on a small scale, weaving the tiny threads together, the progress of their work invisible to mortal eyes—at present. The shouts of the young men, directing or chaffing their companions, the merry laughter of the girls as they hit or missed, or sent their ball flying into the enemy's camp, filled the air with human music. The game was over, and they lounged in groups of twos and threes, talking over the whys and wherefores of success or failure, and changing or deciding "sides" for the next game.

Mrs. Blaine sat, enjoying a brief rest from her hospitable duties, on the terrace above. She had a thoughtful look upon her face, her eyes followed her daughter Dorothy's movements with a grave expression, though there was a smile upon her lips.

Dorothy, or Dolly, as she was more generally called, had taken off her hat, and was swinging it on her arm as she came briskly to her mother's side.

"Please, mother, dear, we want some more lemonade; it is such thirsty work, and we have drained everything dry." She gave a little gasping sigh, adding, as she fanned herself with her hat, "How warm it is!"

"You run about too much, Dolly," replied Mrs. Blaine, smoothing the girl's hair caressingly; "I think we must stop this tennis-playing."

"I like it, mother! You often say that we girls don't take exercise enough. Yet you grumble when we do."

"Because you go to extremes," replied Mrs. Blaine. "Yesterday you complained of being tired—dead-beat, only going down to the village and back, yet you race about at tennis half the day."

"And then am quite ready to begin again!" laughed Dolly.

"But there's all the difference between this sort of thing and an uninteresting walk along a dusty road. I don't call *that* exercise. Besides, one never gets tired of doing what one likes, and I love this glorious game! it exercises one's wits, as well as one's arms and legs." At this moment cries for "Miss Blaine!" mingled with the more familiar name of "Dolly!" came from the other side of the netting, and a tall lithe young fellow, bat in hand, came to fetch her.

"You are wanted, Miss Blaine. We've booked you for our side this time," he announced.

"You've no business to do that, sir, without asking my leave," she answered saucily.

"What would be the use of asking when we knew you would say 'Yes?'" he answered, staring as though he thought she had rebuked him seriously.

"Ah! you know too much," she answered, gravely.

"Well, you couldn't be so impolite as to say 'No,'" he said, with a surprised look in his handsome eyes. "Besides, we want you. You are one of our best players, you know."

"And so am driven to the weakest side. Well, all right!"

"Come on then," he said, prosaically, as they strolled away side-by side.

"Don't forget the lemonade and tea, mother!" Dolly called back over her shoulder; and in another moment they had joined their party. As Mrs. Blaine glanced after them, her brow contracted with the ghost of a frown, and the shadow deepened on her face.

Dorothy's companion, George D'Alton, was a lieutenant in the army—a fine, athletic young fellow, just the stuff a soldier should be made of—good-looking, though by no means a "beauty-man." He was fair-complexioned, with large blue eyes, and thick, close-cut, curly hair, which his family called auburn—others called it red. He was not particularly intellectual, but was a thoroughly good fellow and a gentleman, not only on the surface, but to the heart. He could ride, row, or shoot with any man, and take a hand at any game that was going on. His genial manners made him a favourite everywhere, especially with the young people at The Friars. It used to be "George" and "Dolly" between them when they were boy and girl, but latterly it had stiffened into "Mr. D'Alton" and "Miss Blaine."

They had played several games, and the energies of some of them were beginning to flag when Mr. Kent appeared upon the scene and gave a fillip to their flagging spirits. He was an inveterate tennis-player, though he was always red, and always hot, and though the constant application of his handkerchief to his broad, plump face appeared necessary, yet he never faltered—he went boisterously into the game, wielding the bat with vigorous wildness, and generally missing his ball; nevertheless, he was always welcomed on either side of the players, which said a great deal for his popularity.

Presently he began to play at random, his ball fell wide of the mark. The level rays of the setting sun were in his eyes, he said, and dazzled them so that he could not play. With reckless carelessness, he tossed the ball in one direction, and flung the bat in another, as another object, more dazzling to his eyes than the setting sun, stepped out upon the terrace, and stood ringing a bell to summon the players to some more substantial refreshment than tea and lemonade.

It was Ruth Levison, who for many years had occupied the position of governess to Mrs. Blaine's daughter Dorothy and her niece, Claire Thurlowe. When the girls left the school-room she still remained and was now the confidential friend of the family, the invaluable housekeeper and secretary, and regarded by the mistress in the light of an elder daughter.

She was rather an uncommon type of her race; being tall, slight and fair, with grey eyes and hair of russet brown, shot with rich red gold; she always wore it in one fashion—in massive coils wound round her head, and waving low upon her forehead. Her nose was slightly aquiline, her head well poised upon her full white throat. She was a very beautiful woman. As to her age, she might have been twenty-five, she might have been nearing thirty-five—with women of her type, the years don't count. She presented a picturesque figure as she stood there in a long amber-lined tea-gown, its flowing draperies girdled in at her slender waist.

In obedience to her summons the players left off playing, and came slowly sauntering towards her, evidently in no hurry. Mr. Kent was the first to reach her. She held out her hand to him with a pleasant smile, and the usual words of courteous greeting. He took the hand, and clasped it perhaps longer than

strict etiquette warranted, looking at her the while as men are apt to look on the object of their adoration. She glanced down at the clasped hands, then up in his face :

" Shall we go in ? Mrs. Blaine has been expecting you this long time. We began to think you were not coming at all."

He did not take the hint and loose her hand, but stood for a moment enjoying the felicity of silence. Then he found courage to say :

" Won't you come for a turn, Miss Levison—Ruth ? " He had never called her " Ruth " before. She answered with a rather surprised inquiry :

" Go for a turn ? Now ! Why ? "

" Because I want to talk to you. I've got something serious to say." He had fired his first shot, and then, surprised at his own temerity, stood blushing like an apoplectic lobster.

" Something serious ? " she repeated, with a puzzled air. " Regarding me or you ? "

" Me, mostly."

" There's nothing wrong at Kent House, I hope—nothing wrong with your mother ? " she said politely, but with no special anxiety.

" Oh, no ! It is all right enough there—at least, as right as it can be till I—till you—" He was getting along too quickly, and began to flounder.

" Oh ! well, come in ! " exclaimed Ruth, feeling for his confusion. " We can talk as much, and as seriously as you like, over our cup of tea."

He followed her into the room, where a substantial high tea was being carried on with energy and general satisfaction ; the busy hum of conversation, if the young folks' lively chatter could be called conversation, was interspersed with " the rippling murmur of low laughter's grace ;" everybody had a welcoming word or smile for Mr. Kent, for even those who laughed at his *gaucheries* liked him all the same. He was so genial and unpretentious, though he was so rich ; he gave himself no airs on that account. He " owned up"—as he said—to the fact that he was a self-made man, and made no pretence to education or gentility. He was a shrewd man of business—and that was all. He received the attentions of his more exalted neighbours with becoming humility, which was precisely what they liked, and raised

him higher in their estimation. "If people will only acknowledge their inferiority, it makes things easier, and saves one a world of trouble in putting them down"—as Mrs. Chalcot, the rector's wife, tersely explained.

"So you could not persuade Mrs. Kent to drive over for an hour's chat?" said Mrs. Blaine, with a cordial hand-shake.

"You must please to excuse her," he answered; "my mother is like the hermit crab—it is hard to get her out of her shell."

He made his way to the other end of the room to where Ruth had established herself at the tea-table, and devoted himself thenceforth to assisting her, fetching and carrying according to her orders, feeling quite confidential as he whispered in her ear, "more sugar" for this person, "no milk" for that; he carried plates of ham or chicken hither and thither—now ringing for more muffins, then ordering fresh salads, indeed acquitting himself so well that Ruth declared he deserved "a vote of thanks, that she never could have struggled through her hospitable work without him," whereat he became radiant with delight, and thought he was making way excellently well.

The young people lingered round the table long after their appetites were satisfied, loth to break up the pleasant party. They conspired together and proposed that they should wind up with a carpet dance; the proposal was put to the vote and triumphantly carried, and they began to settle preliminaries and clear decks for action forthwith.

"Ruth dear, you'll play!" exclaimed Dolly; "and you, Mr. Kent, will dance the first dance with me!"

"Much obliged to you, I'm sure, Miss Dolly, but I can't dance."

"Oh, yes, you can, if you try," she answered airily; "you've only got to feel the music and your feet will go of themselves—dancing is just as easy as walking if you only know how."

"Ah! the knowing 'how' is just the question," he replied. "The fact is, Miss Dolly, I never like to attempt to do a thing when there's a chance of failure."

"You won't fail here; I'll keep you all right—we'll call it the first lesson—tum-te-tum-tum"—she began, twirling round. "Come now, I'll take no refusal!"

"Ah, well, if you insist," he answered, "I daresay I can manage to pull you round, but we won't call it dancing."

Dorothy and Claire, prime movers in the impromptu affair,

began pushing back the tables and chairs, but before Dolly could carry out her daring project of teaching "her tame bear" to dance, she caught sight of the telegraph boy coming towards the house, and rushed across the lawn to meet him, and came back waving the telegram above her head.

"It is for grandmamma—I'll take it to her!" she exclaimed, as she ran swiftly upstairs, tossed the missive into her grandmother's lap, saying, "For you, Granny!" and before the old lady could wipe her spectacles and saddle her nose, Dolly had dashed down the stairs and re-entered the room just as Mrs. Blaine came out of the conservatory with a basket of ferns and flowers, having been too much occupied to observe the arrival of the telegram.

Ruth had just sat down to the piano; she began playing a lively waltz, and the room was immediately filled with whirling figures waltzing to their hearts' content. Suddenly the music ceased, and at the same moment, as if by magic, the dancers stopped too, and all eyes were turned towards the door.

Old Mrs. Thurlowe seldom came downstairs; some of the visitors did not even know her by sight, and they stared surprised at the tall black-robed figure of the old lady, her grey hair disordered, her cap awry, her sallow wrinkled face pale and agitated, with the open telegram in her hands.

"What is it, mother?" exclaimed Mrs. Blaine, hurrying forward.

"Read!" replied Mrs. Thurlowe, placing the open telegram in her hand. Mrs. Blaine read it with evident emotion.

"Bad news, mamma?" inquired Dorothy, open-eyed.

"Something unpleasant, I'm sure!" said Claire sympathetically.

Mrs. Blaine handed the telegram to the girls; it was not so terrible in their eyes as in those of their elders. It ran thus—"Sir Reginald Thurlowe died this morning suddenly from heart disease."

"Why, poor old Uncle Reg!" exclaimed Dolly, evidently not much agitated, while Claire said, with mild regret, "Dear, dear me, how sad!"

The telegram was sent by Mr. Levison, Ruth's father, who had been for many years steward to Sir Reginald Thurlowe, and was the general factotum and confidential agent of his master.

The young guests had the tact to see that they were *de trop*, that some trouble had come upon the household. Ruth rose

from the piano ; evidently there was to be no more dancing that day. After brief leave-taking the party broke up, everybody wondering, yet not specially interested in what had befallen at The Friars ; they knew there was neither husband, father, or son in the case, so they did not think anything could matter very much, and they went on their way looking forward to a renewal of pleasant days at The Friars at no distant date.

CHAPTER III.

THE FAMILY SKELETON.

THEY did not indulge in much conversation at The Friars on that evening ; in fact, the mysterious conduct of the elders of the household, who retired to Mrs. Thurlowe's apartment and held a long conversation together with closed doors, perplexed the younger ones exceedingly.

The two girls, Dorothy and Claire, had an ill-used sort of feeling that they were being shut out of something, and resented it accordingly. They occupied adjoining rooms, and generally performed their evening toilettes together in one or other of them. They sat now in Dorothy's room, in a rather discontented state of mind—Claire combing her long soft golden hair, while Dolly brushed out her dark rebellious curls, which never would consent to lie smooth. “I can't think why we are all to be upset about Uncle Reginald's death? Nobody cared much about him when he was alive,” remarked Dorothy.

“*I* didn't ; he always disliked *me*,” said Claire, “and I can't think why?”

“That's all your fancy,” replied Dorothy, “though for the matter of that I don't think he had much love for any of us.”

“He never invited *me* down to Knaresborough,” said Claire, “though he has asked you to stay there for days together. When we were children and he brought us birthday gifts, he gave me mine with a difference. He always showed some signs of family affection for *you*, Dolly. Children don't notice things much at the time, but they think of them afterwards ; and, it is strange, but I don't remember his ever having kissed me !”

“That was no loss,” rejoined Dolly ; “I remember how I used to dread the performance—he had such a horrid bristly beard.”

"I don't see why Ruth should be taken into confidence while we are left out in the cold," said Claire, brushing her hair so vigorously as to get it into a tangle. "I met her just now as I came upstairs ; she was coming out of Granny's room, where she and auntie are still talking ; I saw Ruth had been crying. What could she have to cry about, I wonder? and she put her arms round my neck, and sobbed over me and called me 'her poor darling Claire,' as if some trouble had fallen upon *me*."

"Well," rejoined Dorothy, "though Ruth seems cold and undemonstrative as a rule, she does gush sometimes ! those quiet people always do, when they are once moved ; and do you know —it seems odd," she added, in a low confidential voice, "but Ruth is always so interested in all that goes on at Knaresborough ; sometimes I fancy that years ago, when she was quite young, you know, she may have been fond of Uncle Reginald."

"Rubbish !" replied Claire decidedly ; "he must always have been a hundred years older than Ruth. If you remember that Ruth spent all her early years on the estate, you'll see it's quite natural that she is interested in all that goes on there—and you don't know how far Uncle Reginald's death may affect her father."

"I don't believe Ruth cares much about *him* ! and I do hate family mysteries !" yawned Dorothy, "especially when one is shut out of them, and our nice party broken up just at its pleasantest hour ! It is not kind of mamma to treat us like this, giving us a sugarplum and sending us to bed, as if we were children ! but I'll find out what it all means, as sure as my name is Dolly Blaine."

"If it is anything disagreeable, aunt is sure to keep it from us —she hates to see us worried," said Claire.

"That's nonsense—we can't go through the world without worries—we ought to be taught how to bear them. When I have children, I shall bring them face to face with everything disagreeable from the hour they're born."

"What a change a little thing makes in a house !" sighed Claire ; "we don't seem to breathe the same air as we did this morning—now it seems full of gloom and shadows, as though something were going to happen worse than Uncle Reg's death !"

"Don't give us the creeps just as we're going to bed," said Dolly, gathering her things together. "I'm off—Good night !"

The next morning there was a family debate as to the necessity of going to Knaresborough. There was no male member of the family, at least not in England ; and Mrs. Blaine suggested that her mother, as being the widow of the only brother of the deceased, should start at once for Knaresborough, but Mrs. Thurlowe declared that her age and infirmities must be her excuse if excuse were needed. To Knaresborough she would not go, but proposed that her daughter, Mrs. Blaine, the dead man's niece, should represent the family.

They were strangely unlike, this mother and daughter—Mrs. Thurlowe was tall, dark and thin, her aquiline features stern in outline, her face long and narrow, her lips pale and pinched; a certain puritanic stiffness about her whole aspect. Mrs. Blaine was fair and comely—a good-looking woman still—with rather cold light-blue eyes, a smooth, plump, fresh-coloured face somewhat flat and characterless in its outlines, and a sometimes set and mechanical smile on her lips, which, though almost as thin as her mother's, were cherry-red as a girl's; they lacked the harshness of the rigid lines of the mother's unyielding mouth, but also lacked their firmness.

While they were still debating the question of going to Knaresborough, Mr. Watson, the family lawyer, was announced. He had come down by an early train and arrived at luncheon time, when all the family were seated at table. He gave them a detailed account of the unexpected end of their deceased relative. Most unexpected indeed it was; he had been out with the hounds that very day, and besides was entertaining a pleasant house party; late in the evening he had retired to rest, in his accustomed health and good spirits; in the morning, when the servant went to call him as usual, he found him seated in his chair, cold and dead, dressed exactly as he had left his friends the preceding night.

"An inquest is to be held to-morrow," said Mr. Watson. "Though there is no doubt whatever that he died from heart complaint, from which he had been suffering for some years, still an inquiry must be made. I thought I would run down instead of writing, have a little talk, and escort you ladies to Knaresborough. Though Sir Reginald has left his affairs in perfect order, yet there are many matters that require the presence of the next of kin. We can start by the 4.20 express," he added.

"Meanwhile I should like to have a little business talk. We need not trouble the young ladies with our dry-as-dust legal matters," he added, smiling at the two girls, who were looking rather bored already.

"We shall be very glad to listen, if our opinion or advice can be of any use," said Dolly loftily; "or, mother dear—as there is no time to lose if you are going by the express—we had better go and pack your box; yours too, Granny, if you will let us?"

Mrs. Blaine gave brief directions, but Mrs. Thurlowe said shortly:

"You need not trouble about me. I'm not going."

"Then, mother dear, you can't possibly go alone," said Dolly; "hadn't I better go with you?"

"Thanks, dear child—but I would not submit you to the melancholy ordeal. Ruth shall go, and I daresay she will be glad of the opportunity to see her father."

"Always Ruth!" muttered Dolly pettishly as they went out. As the door closed behind them Mr. Watson looked rather surprised, and said:

"Did I understand rightly, Mrs. Thurlowe, that you have decided *not* to go to Knaresborough?"

The old lady inclined her head, but said nothing.

"But, my dear mother, think!" said Mrs. Blaine deprecatingly. "You to be absent from the funeral, you who represent my father, his only brother! What will the world say?"

"The world and I parted company when my son died," she answered.

"Harold dead?" repeated Mr. Watson. "I never heard of that."

"He died to me when he brought disgrace upon our good name," replied Mrs. Thurlowe sternly.

"But, my dear lady," said Mr. Watson "that bygone matter has nothing to do with the case in point."

"It has everything to do with it," she answered; "I am not a forgiving woman, Mr. Watson, and my husband's brother was cruel and inhuman to my son, who had a right to expect mercy from his own kindred, criminal though he was."

"Mother, I hate to hear you apply that word to Harold; the crime was never really satisfactorily proved against him."

"The law pronounced him guilty, and what the law does must be right; a jury of twelve men cannot be wrong."

"They have been proved wrong scores of times," said Mrs. Blaine. "After a man has suffered misery and disgrace for years, he has been recalled and graciously *pardoned* for a crime he has never committed—pardoned for being the victim of a legal blunder! Mother, you condemn my uncle for being hard upon poor Harold—it seems to me that *you*, his own mother, are harder still."

"No; I am hard upon his sin, not upon *him*," she answered. "I can separate the crime from the criminal. I could forgive Harold. I cannot forget his sin, which has brought disgrace on us. It was Sir Reginald Thurlowe who dragged that disgrace into the public light, and it is for my son's disgrace that my heart is hardened against him now."

"But, my dear madam—" began Mr. Watson.

"But, sir!" exclaimed the old lady, with more vehemence than was usual with her, "he might have hidden the sin and pardoned the sinner—but he did not—he set the cruel law to work against my boy—he dishonoured my husband's name—that was *ours* and *his*! I vowed then I would never look upon his face again, alive or dead and—I will not!"

They knew she would keep her word, so urged their point no more; it was no use wasting time or words upon the subject, there was matter of much more importance to be considered.

The death of Sir Reginald Thurlowe would make a material difference in the fortunes of Claire, the only child of Harold, now Sir Harold Thurlowe; from being a dependent upon her family (although she had never been allowed to feel her dependence) she would be an heiress of considerable importance. Mr. Watson was anxious to learn how much she knew of her unfortunate father's position. Claire was only six years old when her father, then a young man on the right side of thirty, was convicted and sentenced to ten years' penal servitude for forging the name of his Uncle Reginald to a cheque for £800. At the trial he pleaded "Not Guilty." While admitting the fact, which he could not deny, as the bank clerks were *en evidence*, that he had cashed the cheque, he denied the signature, and stated that he had presented the cheque at Mr. Levison's request, and to him had handed over the monies received. At the same time, he acknowledged that he had borrowed three hundred pounds of Mr. Levison in order to extricate himself from some then pressing difficulties.

He had greatly surprised and displeased his friends, some few years before, by marrying a very beautiful but portionless girl, and as nobody knew anything of her belongings, the family refused to receive her and his uncle never forgave him. She died after a few not very happy years, and left him with a little girl, Claire, and a host of debts contracted in his name and without his knowledge. At the time of the forgery, he was known to be very short of money; yet at that very time, these debts had been cleared off—he said from the loan he received from Mr. Levison. However, when that gentleman was perforce called as a witness, he tried hard to shield the honour of the family he had served so long and faithfully—but reluctantly, and with an evidently grieved spirit, he was compelled to deny upon oath that he had anything to do with the aforesaid transaction. He had never given the cheque to Mr. Harold Thurlowe, had never received the money from or lent any money to him. He was deeply distressed at having to appear there and bear this testimony, but in self-defence he was forced to do so, as, by the statement of the accused, he tried to fix the crime on him; but though he was a Jew, with true Christian spirit he forgave him, and would if he could have gladly averted the consequences from Harold's head; but when the law has once fixed its talons in the victim it holds him fast, and though sometimes a storm of public opinion may tear him from its grasp, no such storm was evoked in Harold Thurlowe's case.

In answer to an inquiry of Mr. Watson's concerning Claire, Mrs. Blaine answered:

"Claire was so young when these dreadful things happened, she could not have understood them; and since—well, there has been no time when we thought it advisable to touch upon such a subject."

"Where would have been the use?" exclaimed Mrs. Thurlowe. "She was an excitable, high-spirited child—why should her life be clouded by the knowledge of this miserable secret?"

"It may be sprung upon her one day with a terrible shock," said Mr. Watson, thoughtfully. "I always think it is a pity to keep people in ignorance of what they must one day know."

"There is no necessity that she should ever know," said Mrs. Blaine. "Claire is so sensitive and feels so deeply, I am sure if she knew of her father's suffering and disgrace, the sorrow and

the shame of it would crush her ; I don't believe she would ever hold up her head again. How could she be gay and happy as—thank God—she is, knowing all that we know ? ”

“ If God chooses to send afflictions, in whatever shape they come—we cannot see as He sees, but we know that out of evil there often comes good—I think we ought to grasp our nettle.”

“ Aye, but we have a right to avoid it if we can.”

“ But, as a rule, we cannot,” he answered ; “ we may avoid it to-day, but to-morrow it has an aggravated sting. Of course, you know your own affairs best, it is not for me to intrude my advice—but, may I ask, what does Miss Claire think ? Does she suppose that her father is dead ? ”

“ No—she believes he is travelling, sometimes in Mexico or in California, sometimes in Nicaragua—prospecting in mining districts, seeing in all directions how he can best make a fortune to bring home to her. Sometimes she chafes at his being away so long, and writes begging him to come home and never mind the fortune. She remembers him quite well, you know, and adores his memory.”

“ I think he must return now,” said Mr. Watson, “ however reluctant he may be to do so.”

“ I have written to him often,” said Mrs. Blaine, “ but he says he will never come back till this stigma falls from him.”

“ Humph ! ” exclaimed Mr. Watson, as though he doubted if that would ever be. “ I shall write to him at once in my legal capacity, and urge upon him the necessity of his immediate presence here ; and Miss Claire—— ”

“ Will believe that present circumstances have compelled his return—that there is no longer the need for him to exile himself in search of a fortune elsewhere.”

“ I trust no whisper of the real state of affairs will ever reach her ; but the world is heedless and unforgetting,” said Mr. Watson, reflectively.

“ Who would dare ! who could be so cruel as to crush a child with the weight of its father's sin ? I have faith in the kindness of human nature, and do not believe there is a chance of that,” said Mrs. Blaine.

“ Still; you must remember that at Knaresborough *now* all the old story will be opened by Sir Reginald's death,” he suggested.

“We shall not dream of taking Claire to Knaresborough,” said Mrs. Blaine, decidedly.

There was a tap at the door.

“May I come in?” and Claire’s face followed her voice. “I hope I don’t interrupt you, but, auntie dear, if you are really going by the 4.20 train you have no time to lose. Dolly has put up everything she thinks you’d want, the trap’s at the door, and here comes Jim for the luggage.”

Dolly came dancing down the stairs, followed more sedately by Miss Levison, dressed for the journey, and bringing Mrs. Blaine’s mantle and bonnet in her hand. Kisses and hugs were freely dispensed, mingled with entreaties that they would soon come back, and meanwhile “write every day and send all news of everybody.”

Mrs. Thurlowe’s last words were :

“Remember me very kindly to your father, Ruth ; there is no man in the world I respect more than Mr. Levison.”

The girls shaded their eyes from the glaring sun, and watched the vehicle till it was beyond their sight. They returned to the house feeling that home would be rather lonely now that Ruth and mother were both away.

“I don’t remember that we two have ever been left alone before!” exclaimed Dolly.

“We are not exactly alone now,” rejoined Claire ; “there’s Granny.”

“Oh, Granny doesn’t count ; she talks very little to us, and when she does, it is chiefly to find fault—it’s lucky she keeps so much in her own room. I wonder if all old people are disagreeable and unsociable !”

“I’m always sorry for old people,” said Claire, “sorry for their *being* old. We young ones have always something to look forward to, something to hope for. If the present is dark we look for brighter days to come. *They* can’t—their days are naturally very limited, each one is leading on to a darker night—and as for Granny, you know, Dolly, I always think she has got, or has had some great trouble somewhere.”

“Well, everybody has troubles, but most people get over them—it is foolish not to,” said the decided Dolly ; “they say troubles are sent for our good, and if they are, we ought to be glad to get them, and make as much haste as we can to get over them.”

"There are some troubles people never get over," said Claire gravely, "some things so terrible they can't rally from, and we should hardly respect them if they did."

"That's nonsense!" said Dolly; "everybody must rally from everything—they may be knocked down and get badly hurt, but they get up again. Whatever happens, people have got to live, unless they kill themselves, and some are too cowardly, and some are too brave for that."

"Yes, it is much braver to face a sorrow and live it down than to fly in the face of fate and end it in our own blind fashion. You know, Dolly," Claire continued thoughtfully, "the end of one thing may only be the beginning of another, we never really know when or where anything ends."

"Dear old Claire, you always go in for things so solemnly!" said Dolly; "if only female preachers were allowed in this country, I'm sure you'd do well in the pulpit! Do you remember, at the Glaishers' party last year, somebody said in the sweetest American twang, 'Our dear pastor is over here for a few weeks—one of the most eloquent preachers we have—may I introduce you?' and lo! instead of a venerable clergyman, or a budding young curate, behold an elderly female in corkscrew curls and spectacles!" and the two girls wandered off into reminiscences of the Glaishers' party.

"By-the-bye," Claire said suddenly, "Dolly dear, did auntie say anything of what we are to do about our mourning? You know, of course, we must have black of some sort."

"Well, yes, I suppose so," answered Dolly, "but everything seems in such a hurry. It seems to me that mamma had hardly time to think. There was that Mr. Watson coming down in that unexpected way, and carrying her and Ruth off so unceremoniously. Very inconsiderate of them to go without leaving us some directions."

"Well, but as they have gone we must give directions to ourselves. What do you think we had better do?" said Claire.

"I don't think we need go into the deepest affliction department," said Dolly, "he was only mother's uncle. I don't think we need send to town; as usual, we must arrange things on the strictest economical principles. I've only got eight-and-sixpence left out of my allowance."

"Had we not better consult grandmamma?" suggested Claire.

Grandmamma was duly consulted, and to their surprise she in return consulted them as to their wants and requirements.

"Well, Granny," replied Dolly, who was generally spokeswoman, "what we want and what we can have are very different things, but I really think I ought to have a new black silk dress."

"I can turn my old one," exclaimed Claire, who thought more of what she could do without than what she could have, "and take the coloured trimmings off my black cashmere, and furbish up my silk cape. It will not be the first time I have made an old thing look like new. A very small outlay will put me in decent mourning."

"There need be no talk of furbishing up anything," said grandmamma; "your mother wishes you both to have everything handsome and good. If you will let me have a list of all you wish to have—you especially, my dear Claire—I will send them off to Madame Colombe to-night."

Dolly was delighted, and went off to make her list with a most important air. It was the first time she had had *carte blanche* in the matter of dress, and she revelled in it accordingly.

"It seems so strange; I wonder whether the skies are going to fall, Claire! Have just what we want! Evidently there's going to be no cheeseparing in this case; no fight for a feather, or struggle for a yard of lace. I shall order my mantle to be trimmed with the very handsomest *passemeunterie*; one doesn't need crape for a great-uncle, you know. Do you think we ought to have black-bordered pocket-handkerchiefs, just to put our noses in mourning? Why shouldn't our noses mourn as well as the rest of us? What a delightful occupation this is, and I thought we should have such a dreadfully dull day!"

"Oh! do be quiet, Dolly; you confuse me so, I can't get on with my list. How fond you are of talking!"

"I am," said Dolly frankly, "I love the sound of my own voice."

"And you don't care who it is you are talking to, nor what you are talking about," said Claire, smiling.

"Really I don't think I do much," Dolly admitted. "I'd rather talk to a dead donkey than not talk at all."

There was no fear of the two girls being dull—a double antidote to dulness was fast approaching.

CHAPTER IV.

LOVE'S YOUNG DREAM.

THERE was no strict rule laid down as to the hours of visiting at The Friars ; people dropped in promiscuously at all hours, sometimes in the early morning, sometimes in the early evening. The sudden breaking up of the tennis party the day before brought a host of inquiring friends ; the bell seemed to be ringing all day ; but no visitors were admitted. The unexpected arrival of Mr. Watson, and departure of Mrs. Blaine and Ruth, kept everybody fully employed. When that excitement was over, and Madame Colombe had been duly communicated with, the girls thought they would take a stroll and see the sunset from the top of Ongar Hill. As they crossed the lawn they met Mr. Kent, accompanied by another gentleman, coming towards the house. Mr. Kent's face beamed with even extra brightness as he hustled forward to shake hands and proudly present his brother Algernon.

"Only arrived an hour ago!" he exclaimed in an audible whisper to Dolly, blinking both eyes mysteriously ; "was so anxious to see—everybody, you know! was in such a hurry, he would hardly stop to brush the dust off his clothes."

Who was the "everybody" that Algernon Kent was so anxious to see would have been evident to the eyes of a stone image. Claire's face flushed with sudden gladness as their eyes met, and their hands met too in a close warm clasp. The girls turned and walked back with their visitors, re-entered the house, and went into the library.

"I am sorry that everybody isn't here to welcome you," said Dolly demurely, for she had a very strong idea that Ruth composed the "everybody" in Mr. Kent's eyes. "Mamma and Ruth have gone to Knaresborough."

"To Knaresborough!" echoed Mr. Kent, for the moment quite taken aback. "Ah ! yes, about that melancholy bit of business, of course—I quite understand," and he elongated his fat, jolly face and looked ludicrously sympathetic. "I—that is, we, mother and I—were very sorry to hear about it. I hope it was nothing very particular—I mean no very near relation—nothing to break your hearts about, you know."

"Not exactly," replied Dorothy, "it was only a great-uncle

whom we very seldom saw ; but it is always sad for anybody to die."

"Ah ! yes, of course ; but, then, you know, we've all got to do it some day ; so that's all right—we must remember 'all flesh is grass !'" This agricultural simile seeming most appropriate to the occasion, he paused a moment to allow it to produce a fitting impression, then added, "Suppose they are coming back soon—Miss Levison and your mother, I mean ?"

"I hope so," said Dorothy, "it will be awfully dull getting along here without them."

"We must come and brighten you up a bit. Algy will be delighted—so unexpected his coming, but he'll only be here for a few days. I dare say he's telling Miss Claire all about it. Such a stroke of luck for a young fellow ! We want to make things pleasant for him ; and mother will be delighted if you'll both come and spend a day up at the house. Can you ? will to-morrow suit you ?"

"You hear, Claire," exclaimed Dorothy rather irritably, for she did not care to have the whole burden of conversation with Mr. Kent left upon her shoulders, and Claire and Algernon were having a *tête-à-tête* all to themselves. "Mrs. Kent invites us to spend the day with her to-morrow."

"Mrs. Kent is very kind," replied Claire, "but don't you think, Dolly dear, that under present circumstances we had better stay at home ?"

It was fortunate that Dolly agreed, for Mr. Kent, in his desire to be agreeable, had hurried himself into a purely fictitious assurance on his mother's behalf. No one would have been more amazed than Mrs. Kent if the two girls had availed themselves of this impromptu invitation, which, coming as it did, it is not likely they would under any circumstances have accepted. But Mr. Kent was ignorant of social ethics, and thought his invitation was quite as good as his mother's.

The quartette sat chatting for some time, and then nominally went for a stroll in the garden, but they extended their ramble beyond it, and wandered into the open country beyond, where they could walk and talk, or not talk, as they pleased. They split into pairs. Algernon and Claire managed, as they generally did, to pair together, and the two couples lost and found one another more than once during their evening ramble.

That Algernon Kent and Claire Thurlowe were drawn together by some strong affinity was generally suspected even beyond their own household, though nobody knew the exact state of affairs ; perhaps nobody but the young people themselves could have enlightened them. Mrs. Blaine quiescently permitted the attentions of Algernon Kent to her niece Claire, and smiled well-pleased on the advances which she believed his elder brother was making to her own daughter Dorothy. Mr. Kent *was* attentive to Dorothy ; there was no denying that ; though she was not the rose, she was near the rose ; and Dorothy received his vicarious and somewhat awkward attentions with some amusement. She knew her mother was under a misapprehension altogether, but made no attempt to set her right ; she had views of her own to which, at the present time, she did not wish to call attention, so allowed her mother to wander unmolested through her Fool's Paradise, well knowing she must be roused from her dream of delight soon.

Meanwhile Mrs. Blaine was supremely content. She never for a moment imagined that Ruth's more mature and stately beauty could weigh in the balance against her darling Dorothy's fresh young loveliness. She had rested for some months past content with the idea that she had the prospect of settling her two portionless girls satisfactorily from a worldly point of view. She never imagined that Dolly would fail to see with her eycs. Mrs. Blaine took no stock whatever in the love-market. It was all very well to play at love-making ; girls would so amuse themselves—perhaps it was natural they should ; but when the reality came in the shape of solid settlements and serious matrimonial arrangements, then romance and sentimentality must be trodden under foot. All sensible well-bred girls would take her view, and prefer the substance to the shadow, regarding love as an ephemeral fleeting passion, that like the butterfly lives its little hour and passes away, whereas wealth, good solid wealth—with all its concomitant advantages—stays, always the most welcome guest at life's varied feast. Wealth feeds and clothes and keeps love warm and comfortable ; poverty pinches and sends it hungrily grovelling to pick up crumbs, till it grows lean and shrivels up and dies from sheer starvation.

Mrs. Blaine took a purely business view of most matters ; she submitted most things to the crucial test of expediency—what

was expedient must surely be done ; therefore of any little wandering fires of flirtations she took no notice ; they would be quickly extinguished when the right time came. Meanwhile, on this, as on most other subjects, the girls held their own opinions, and waited till the tug of war should come.

The sudden change in Claire's fortune (of which she herself was at present unconscious, for she had never been led to think of or dwell upon family matters) might have some influence upon her prospects, for though Algernon Kent was a very good match for a portionless girl, when the daughter of Sir Harold Thurlowe, of Knaresborough, was concerned it was a different matter. It never came into Mrs. Blaine's calculation that men of the Kent stamp are great sticklers for honesty and honour ; they have their own sturdy pride, and like a clean record, and would regard a law-breaker or criminal of high degree with less favour than an honest mender of pots and pans. Besides, to put things quite plainly, the daughter of a returned convict, rich man and baronet though he might be, would not occupy in the world's eyes the proud position she did in those of her loving relations, as she would do were she the daughter of a man "*sans peur et sans reproche*."

As they, the family circle, had buried that shameful past, and hidden it away from her it most concerned, they thought it had passed out of the world's memory as out of the world's sight. Overwhelmed with grief when the misfortune first fell upon them, the elder ladies had withdrawn from society ; but as the girls grew up, they had changed their residence, formed new acquaintances who knew nothing of the sad family history, drawn together round them a pleasant circle of chiefly young people, and gradually grown into a happy confidence that the melancholy history of Harold's disgrace was unknown or forgotten. No one now ever made any inquiry after, or seemed aware of, the existence of the son and brother—he had gone down into the dark waters ; but, let him once lift his head, and attempt to take his original place among men, and those who now seemed to forget would remember, and resurrect the old sin in all its vigorous life. The world never really forgets, though in the hurrying crowd of passing events it may appear to do so for a time ; but the day comes when its memory stirs with fatal remembrances, and the old wounds of the wrong-doer are forced to burst and bleed anew.

The "sins of the father shall be visited on the children," says

the Scripture, and this (to our short-seeing eyes) most cruel law has been rigorously carried out from generation to generations.

Mrs. Blaine considered all things according to her fashion, and determined not to stir or in any way interfere in Claire's doings, unless her father should either give the reins entirely into *her* hands, or return and take them in his own.

Algernon Kent was a far likelier man to take a girl's fancy than his brother, and was indeed his opposite in every particular. He had derived the full benefit of his brother's wealth ; for Reginald Kent was so conscious of his own deficiencies of education, that he determined that his younger brother should labour under no such disadvantages. He sent him to one of the best public schools ; he had wished him to be educated for the Church, or, at least, to enter one of the learned professions, but Algernon's inclination did not point in that direction ; he had a taste, more than a taste, a positive genius, for mechanics, and by his earnest desire was articed in due time to an engineering firm of some eminence. He had devoted himself so devoutly to his profession, and made such rapid progress therein, that now he occupied a position of trust and responsibility, and had a promising career before him.

The two brothers might have descended from different families, so unlike were they both in appearance and temperament ; Algernon was tall, slight, and dark, with more refined features than his brother's, and manners more polished though quite as genial. He had a musical resonant voice, which, however, never rose to that hilarious mirth in which Reginald so often indulged ; in fact, he had the manner and appearance of a man of culture and education—the manner which is not learned in schools or borrowed from books, but is absorbed from the associations of daily life, as a flower absorbs the sunlight, without effort or design ; yet with all his professional devotion he had never neglected masculine accomplishments, and could ride, row, and shoot as well as most men, better than many. He was as strong and agile as he was genuinely attractive in other ways, and so it came to pass when he and Claire first met during the last summer season, they had fallen in love with one another ; for her there was no goodlier man, for him no sweeter, lovelier specimen of womankind ; they had not yet openly acknowledged their mutual affections, but each instinctively knew the feeling of the other—for there is

something in the atmosphere of mutual unuttered love that subtly possesses the whole soul and body long before it resolves itself into words. The time had come now when Algernon felt he *must* speak; he wanted more than vague hopes and restless longings to build his future life upon, and he had come down this bright summer day to tell her so.

One woman will generally help another in a love affair—and though Claire had never confided in Dolly, and shrank with true feminine delicacy from any admission of a love which might be thrown on barren ground, and which, so far as spoken words were concerned, was unsought, yet Dolly *knew*, as plainly as though Claire's heart had been reflected in a looking-glass, and contrived to lose the other couple effectually at last, so that while she and Reginald went home through the lanes, Algernon and Claire were sauntering slowly through the shady wood. Dolly's good nature in submitting to be bored by Mr. Kent for a time, in order that Algernon and Claire might enjoy an uninterrupted *tête-à-tête*, was no fruitless self-sacrifice. Algernon availed himself of the opportunity, and the old story was told over again, the love-draught quaffed by two thirsty souls, as they wandered through the soft mysterious woods; the twilight shadows grew and wrapt them round with ghostly greyness; still they lingered.

"We must turn back now," whispered Claire reluctantly, "they will wonder what has become of us."

"Let them wonder," he answered, with supreme contempt for all commonplace things. To return to lamp-light and cake and wine in the drawing-room, and conventional chit-chat with Reginald and Dolly, after this brief indulgence in supreme bliss, seemed too commonplace to be faced at present. He slipped his arm round her waist and drew her closer to him, till her fair curly head almost rested on his shoulder. "Darling Claire," he added, with a little caressing accompaniment, "you don't know how I have thought, how I have longed for this hour to come! You must have known how *I* loved *you* all along—but I have tortured myself wondering if you would ever give me a little bit of love in return—sometimes I thought yes—then I doubted."

"Now you are satisfied," she whispered softly.

"Well, I can't say that," he answered, "I shall not be really satisfied till I have you for my own—my very own, Claire."

"I am your own now—at least, I shall never be anybody else's."

"Aye, but knowing a thing is yours, and *having* it, is a very different matter. I may have a mansion in the skies, but it is not really mine till I take possession—you understand that, my little girl. I want you for my own little wife, darling."

"Oh!" exclaimed Claire, with a startled expression, "how can you think of such a thing, so soon?"

"I have been thinking of it for the last six months," he answered.

"Why! half an hour ago we were not even engaged—and I don't believe we're engaged now! you've never really asked me."

"That doesn't in the least matter; we might have been engaged six months ago if I'd known—so, reckoning on a commercial scale, we've lost just six months of our lives—and we've got to make that up, and I think we ought to begin doing it as soon as we can. Let me see. It is now the 27th of June; on the 30th of August I start for Austria."

"For Austria!" echoed the amazed Claire.

"Did not I tell you? Of course, though, I forgot; we have had no time to talk of business yet. Well, darling, here's the fact. I've got to engineer and superintend the making of a new railway in the furthest corner of Austria—it is a great professional advance for me, and all things look bright ahead. You won't let me go alone, Claire, will you? It would be too cruel *now!* There's plenty of time; I'll speak to Mrs. Blaine directly she comes home, or, bless me! there's your grandmother—I forgot her, she so seldom shows. Why, we may be married and off before the world has time to open its lazy old eyes and wink after us." Claire was bewildered by his rapid sketch, the way he seemed to pull invisible wires and shift the scene from the heights of love to the plains of matrimony. He positively took away her breath!

"But all this is impossible!" she exclaimed, "I couldn't, indeed I couldn't, Algernon; I have never thought of marrying any man yet!"

"I am glad of that," he answered heartily; "but it is time now that you thought of marrying *me!* and think hard and fast, my Claire; when you are going to a place it is no use loitering by the way. You remember the bashful man who was too shy to propose to the lady? so he invited her to go for a walk, and took her past a church. 'Why, there's a church!' said he, very much surprised; they went in; 'And there's a parson, and here's a ring;

let us **get married.**' Now, that would exactly suit me. I don't know **how** I shall be able to leave you for a day! I should like to carry **you off** bodily this very minute, and get married without any of **that idiotic** fuss about bridesmaids, orange-blossoms, and iced cake; it was all very well in barbarous times, when men got their **wives by club law**, and decorated them like lambs for the sacrificial altar; but in these civilized days, the binding of two lives **together** is too serious a matter to be inaugurated with frivolity and flowers. If you only reflect for a moment, I am sure you will agree with me."

Claire hesitated: she would like to agree with him, but in this she really could not. He was carelessly sweeping away all the traditions of her life! What would a wedding be without the accessories he so despised? and which to her had always seemed as important a part of the ceremony as the bridegroom's self. She ventured to insinuate that she should not feel like being married at all without these condemned blossoms and bridesmaids; upon which he, coward-like, thrust his own convictions aside, and promised she should have a cart-load of orange-blossoms and a church full of bridesmaids if she liked; *he* should be oblivious, shut his eyes and see nothing—"nothing but her face." Then they dipped again into a sea of lovers' talk, and when they came up again it was quite dark; they were within sight of The Friars, and they began to be commonplace and sensible again.

"Doesn't it seem strange?" he whispered fondly; "when we left the house such a short time ago, we were two separate, distinct souls! now we belong to one another! So much has happened, it seems as though yesterday was ages ago! I feel as though I had only lived since I have known that you love me, dearest. No, don't go in yet—we have so little time to be together; I must hurry back to look after this Austrian business—there's such a fight for every stroke of luck; a great many men would give their ears to stand in my place."

"Let them!" exclaimed Claire eagerly. "Why should you go to Austria at all? Are you obliged? Surely your brother, who is a rich man——"

"Aye, and a generous one too," answered Algernon warmly; "he has given me a good education and a good start in life; for so much I am indebted to him, but in future I must be indebted

only to myself—every man who is worth his salt should make his own way in the world independently of any other man ; that is what I mean to do, and show Regy that all his brotherly love and care has not been thrown away. He thinks a great deal of my talent, and looks forward to my making myself a place in the world—and I mean to do it. You will help me, dearest, and I shall be doubly strong, doubly energetic, for your sake. Together ‘we’ll take the field of life, and march to victory.’ Some poet says that, I forget which, but we’ll reduce it to plain prose, eh, my Claire ?”

“I don’t know,” answered Claire dreamily, “it is all so sudden. I—I don’t think I ought to let myself be engaged to you at all until auntie and my father know about it.”

“Your father !” echoed Algernon, stopping short, “why, you haven’t got a father, have you ? it’s a joke !”

“Why shouldn’t I have a father ?” she exclaimed quickly.

“Because nobody has ever seen him, or ever heard of him, dear,” returned Algernon, “and, naturally, everybody thinks you are an orphan.”

“Thank God ! I’m not,” she answered fervently ; then she added more reflectively, “I daresay it does seem strange—you see, he left England when I was quite a little thing. I believe he was so distracted with grief at my dear mother’s death, that he rushed away, and has never come back. He has been travelling about in all sorts of strange countries ; I believe he is somewhere in California now.”

“Of course he writes to you ?” said Algernon, rather puzzled.

“Well, not to me, but to auntie, and that only once a year ; she gives me messages from him—and that is the one thing in the world that troubles me ; they won’t talk to me about him ; I think they are angry at his staying away so long—it is strange, isn’t it ?”

Algernon admitted that it did look rather strange, adding,

“Though, perhaps, if you knew all the circumstances, it might not seem strange at all. When a man is travelling through strange scenes, and mixing with strange people, he finds so much to interest and excite him, that in the fulness of the new life he is apt to forget the old ; and then the time passes so quickly ; he may always be thinking of returning home, and putting

off, and putting off the coming till the best part of his life lies behind him."

It was quite dark when they forced themselves to return to The Friars, where they found the hypocritical Dolly anxiously waiting their return, quite apologetic for having lost them, and Grannie ready to administer a scolding all round. "They ought not to have gone out at all under the circumstances, especially without her leave; now that her daughter was away she was responsible for everything, temporarily at least the head of the house; they had given a great shock to the proprieties, too, wandering about in masculine company till that late hour of the evening, &c." It was not often the taciturn grandmamma made such a long speech.

Algernon hurled himself into the breach, and took all the blame upon himself. He was accustomed to make himself pleasant to young and old, and now smoothed the old lady's ruffled plumes so effectually that a grim smile parted her lips as he, with effusive cordiality, shook hands and said, "Good night." The girls, meanwhile, glad to escape, slipped out of the room to avoid a renewal of Grannie's righteous wrath.

She looked after the young fellow with a reflective, puzzled face, the thin lips tightly closed, the drawn brows contracting into extra wrinkles as she muttered to herself half aloud :

"He is like—strangely like—to Reginald! To-night, as he is lying in his coffin, the years seem to have rolled back, and I see him now, as I saw him then—this boy's face has brought him back to me." And she sat pondering upon the dead man's early sins—lost, utterly lost to the present—thinking only of the past, face to face in her reverie once more with the living and the dead.

(*To be continued.*)

3 Wonder !

I STOOD afar and looked at Love,
And marked the gladness of his air.
The rain falls coldly from above.
I wonder why he seemed so fair !

Then drew he near and took my hand,
And at his touch I sighed amain.
The summer sun delights the land.
I wonder why Love seemed like pain !

“ My rose-wreath hurts : who wears it, weeps,”
Love whispered, and our lips did meet.
The trembling dawn to mid-day creeps.
I wonder why the pain seemed sweet !

FAYR MADOC.

LONDON SOCIETY.

FEBRUARY 1892.

The Countess Pharamond.

(A SEQUEL TO "SHEBA.")

By "RITA,"

Author of "GRETCHEN," "THE LAIRD o' COCKPEN," "SHEBA," etc., etc.

CHAPTER VI.

POLICY AND POPULARITY.

PAUL lingered on at Heidelberg through all the weeks of spring, and in Paris the Countess Pharamond was enjoying the sweets of popularity and success. She saw as little of her husband as was possible, but he took good care to inform himself of her every movement and occupation. He had too little faith in women to trust one of them. His wife, however, gave him no cause for any special jealousy. The admiration she allowed was merely a general admiration, and in no single case had degenerated into anything approaching intimacy. In truth she disliked Frenchmen and Frenchwomen. They were superficial and insincere; the men were invariably sensualists and voluptuaries, the women frivolous and immoral.

Not that the translation of Bessie Saxton into the Countess Pharamond meant that the girl's nature had also undergone a change. She was in every way fitted for fashionable life, and delighted in its endless excitements and enjoyments. But there came times when her associates wearied and disgusted her, when her gowns and jewels seemed of small account, when the voice of flattery rang hollow as false coinage, and vice looked ugly and coarse under the gilded shame, or specious pleas that strove to hide it from the world, or dignify it by the name of a *grande passion*.

She thought women were too solicitous to please, and men too indifferent. She often felt bored, though she dared not show it, even to her husband. Nothing is really so wearisome as a perpetual round of pleasure, though no one who has not tried it will believe the fact. The Countess Pharamond had a hundred "dear friends." Strange to say the one whom she liked best, and found the most useful and amusing, was the Duchesse de Valette. They saw each other almost daily; called each other by their Christian names; discussed toilettes before ordering them, and consulted each other on every little fashionable difficulty or dilemma that was rude enough to obtrude itself even under the gilded roofs of *le monde*.

There was no rivalry between them. The *belle Hélène* had her own *coterie* of admirers, and was still queen of her own special set. It was a very fast set, but it was very amusing, and managed to get a good deal out of life.

The women smoked and flirted, and had adventures more or less *risqué*, and ran into debt to their tailors and milliners, and were at every race-course and every ball that was fashionable. They were *au fait* with every infamy, and delighted in the most impudent personalities respecting their dearest friends. They chattered and gossiped, and laughed and sneered, and believed in nothing, and cared for very little, save the success of a new gown or the sensation of a new scandal.

The Countess Pharamond was decidedly "out of it" among them, though by no means over-scrupulous or prudish in her ideas. But, fortunately for herself, her tastes were not vicious, her nature decidedly cold, and she had a wholesome fear of her husband.

She made up her mind that she was not going to risk what she had won for the sake of any sentimental folly, and the men she met in society were utterly incapable of inspiring her with even a passing interest.

They all seemed vicious and effeminate beside the only specimen of manhood that had ever found favour in her eyes, or aroused her interest.

Brief as was her acquaintance with Paul Meredith, little as she had known of him, yet the physical attraction he had held for her had never been superseded. When she saw him again in her own *salons*, that attraction was in no way lessened by the fact that he held honours and possessions far exceeding her own.

All other men had seemed dwarfed into insignificance in his presence. Even had he passed from her memory he was destined to be perpetually recalled, for her friend Hélène was constantly sounding his praises and lamenting his departure. "He was so handsome, so distinguished;" had an air of such charming melancholy, "a physique so manly, a manner so courteous." So would the duchesse run on with her vivacious and by no means reticent eulogies, and almost unconsciously Bessie found herself comparing him with other men, certainly not to his disadvantage.

Meanwhile, the season went on, and Pharamond had no reason to be dissatisfied with his wife's social success, or to find fault with her behaviour. Indeed, she steered her way through the somewhat difficult waters of Parisian society with a skill he could not help admiring; triumphing, with a bright and willing acceptance of her triumphs, and offending no rival, even while accepting universal homage.

She was popular without effort, and was wise enough to be always more considerate to women than to men. From the latter she had nothing to fear; from the former, a great deal to gain.

The keenest policy could not have served her better than did her own instincts, and in making a friend of Hélène de Valette, she put the finishing touch to her popularity, and even won the reluctant admiration of her husband.

With the end of the season the countess—rather timidly—ventured her request as to that visit to England, but Pharamond roughly refused to go there.

The truth was he was a little anxious to get rid of his wife for a time. He had been invited to make one of a very fast and wild bachelors' party at a *château* in Hungary, owned by a certain Magyar prince chiefly notable for his vices and extravagances. No ladies were to be invited. Sport of the roughest, and gambling of the most reckless description, was the programme. It suited Pharamond, who had a certain amount of recklessness, savagery, and love of adventure not usually characteristic of his nation.

In this dilemma he betook himself to Madame de Valette for counsel and assistance. He knew his wife would not remain at their own *château* with only her child and mother-in-law for company, during the hot summer months.

The duchesse was in her boudoir and alone. Even Pharamond's keen eye could not but admire the skill with which art had defied the ravages of time both in her appearance and surroundings.

He murmured some complimentary phrases as he seated himself by her side, and she accepted them with due recognition of an insincerity that once had been almost too ardently sincere.

"On my life, Hélène," he said, "you grow younger every year. Who would think you were a day older than Bessie?"

She laughed, and took a scented cigarette from her silver case.

"Your wife is built on grand lines. She will look no older at forty than she does to-day," she said. "And, now, to what do I owe this honour?"

She shot an inquiring, somewhat mischievous glance at him, as she leaned back on a pile of cushions and sent the tiny rings of smoke up to the shell-tinted ceiling.

"I want to consult you," he said frankly, "about—about my wife."

She raised her eyebrows. "Surely she is not giving you any trouble yet?" she said demurely—"much as you deserve it."

He laughed grimly. "No, I have no fear of that. The truth is, *ma chère*, I want to go away for a month or two, and I cannot very well take her where I am going. Could you not suggest a visit to Spa, or Kissingen, or Ischl to her? and would you very much mind going with her? I know women are always the better for a visit to *Bads* and springs."

The duchesse looked at him with unfeigned amusement. "Why do you not suggest it yourself? She is singularly obedient."

"But she cannot go alone, and she would certainly not go with any one she did not like. Now, you are such close friends——"

"Oh, *mon ami*, I do not need so much explanation," interrupted the duchesse. "I had intended to go to Trouville; but, on the whole, I do not see why Spa or Ischl should not be as amusing. They are certainly far more healthy. I have always heard the waters are good for the complexion. And I suppose there is decent society. Strange, I have never been there before."

"To say you are going, is to attract society after you," said Pharamond gallantly. "The Duchesse de Valette has always

her own court and courtiers. If you decide to go, I will join you later on my way from Hungary."

"I wonder what his object really is," thought the duchesse, regarding him speculatively under her lowered lids. "He has one, I know. There is no earthly reason why Bessie should not go by herself, or with his mother. Why does he ask me?"

She wondered whether it would amuse her to go to wild forests and mountain heights, to martyrize herself at a *Trinkhalle*, and live among *châlets* and woods.

It would be a novelty and a rest. She was candid enough to acknowledge that she did need *that*—occasionally.

Fatigue was possible, and physical weariness not altogether unknown, even amidst the thousand distractions and amusements of society.

"You are going to Hungary?" she said presently. "Ah! I have heard of that party. Our sex is to be rigorously excluded. My dear Maxime, what will you do?"

He laughed. "Is not a fast the best preparation for a feast?" he said. "I shall console myself with the hope of seeing you afterwards."

She shook her head with its myriad little golden curls. "We have passed the stage of flattery and compliments, *mon ami*. Besides—though it may sound droll—I really like your wife."

"I am pleased to hear it," said Pharamond drily; "it is a compliment to my taste and judgment."

"I confess your marriage surprised me," she continued; "but, on the whole, I am inclined to think you are very fortunate. She is not cold, but she is undoubtedly honest. The combination is unusual, I allow. But you neglect her very much. Do not be too sure it will be always safe to do so."

His brow darkened. "I have no fear," he said. "She knows me, and she understands my conduct is to be no rule for hers. For the rest, Hélène, I trust you. After all, you were my friend before you were hers."

"Does that mean I am to play the spy to please you? Thank you, *mon ami*; it is not a *rôle* I appreciate."

"You know very well what I mean, Hélène; I am not in love with her and never was—I cared more for your little finger in the days of old than for all the beauty she possesses. But all the same she is my wife, and I do not choose her to be——"

"As you have found the wives of other men? Is not that it? It is curious how marriage brings out all the selfishness of a man's character. I think your wife has a great deal to learn, Maxime; but do not fear that I shall teach her the art of—compensation."

"A woman does not need much teaching," he said gloomily; "her nature is apt enough."

The duchesse laughed merrily. "I believe," she said, "you are jealous, though you pretend indifference. That is foolish, and makes one uncomfortable. Nowadays a husband does not avenge—he only ignores. Not that you will have cause to do either. Your wife is not of the type. As I said before, you are singularly fortunate. Only—sometimes one finds sinners more amusing than saints."

"No doubt," he said. "But then one does not go to one's wife for—amusement."

He rose and laid his hand caressingly on her shoulder. "You will go with her to Austria?" he asked with a little doubt.

She glanced up. "But certainly, if you wish, my friend. All the same it is a strange whim—and will she like it? She was so anxious to go to England."

"That," he said grimly, "is the very reason I choose her to go to Austria."

The Duchesse de Valette lay back on her pile of cushions for long after he had left, reflecting and wondering over those last words.

They had meant—something. Of that she was quite sure. Why should Pharamond object to that visit to England which his wife had looked upon as settled? And why was he so anxious that she should accompany the countess? "He has some motive, I am sure of that," she said to herself as she glanced with satisfaction at her own reflection. "And I shall find it out—in time. I have found out everything else about him. It will be strange if I fail now."

CHAPTER VII.

IN SEARCH OF DISTRACTION.

THE Countess Pharamond heard of the projected scheme from her friend Hélène and acceded to it at once.

The fact of being free for even one month from her husband's

presence and association was of itself enough to reconcile her to any project, however disagreeable. But this was not disagreeable. She liked travelling and novelty, and was on sufficiently intimate terms with Madame de Valette to accept her as a companion in preference to any other of her many Parisian acquaintances. She was always lively, amusing and good-natured. Indeed Hélène de Valette was one of those fortunately-dispositioned women who are always on good terms with themselves and to whom life seems a perpetual comedy. She had never—in her own opinion—done anything very wrong, and to possess such an opinion is one of the secrets of personal comfort. Now and then she had been guilty of a weakness, a folly, perhaps an imprudence; but these were, after all, the fault of circumstances, and even very wise people acknowledged you could not control circumstances, however much you might wish to do so.

So in due time she and the Countess Pharamond arrived at pretty, quiet, pine-wooded Ischl, having secured rooms at the "Kaiserina," and dispatched many *fourgons* in advance, and attended by couriers and maids and other necessary appendages of fashionable travellers.

They had not hurried over the journey, but taken it in leisurely fashion, staying here and there as fancy decided. Indeed, the countess had been so charmed with Salzburg that she had been with difficulty persuaded to leave it.

When dinner was over, however, on the evening of their arrival, and she and Madame de Valette were sitting in the balcony of their room, watching the moon rise slowly over the heights of pine and the dusky waters of the Traun, and the shadowy groups under the trees of the esplanade, she acknowledged she was glad they had come here.

Ischl was not very full, it being yet early in the season. That, however, according to Madame de Valette, was rather an advantage, as it would give them opportunity to attend to their health and test the recuperative powers of baths and springs before facing the gay crowds who would assemble later on.

Meanwhile their rooms were delightful; the *cuisine* seemed excellent; the weather was warm and settled, according to their host and courier; they had dined comfortably, and were only conscious now of that pleasant sense of fatigue which makes rest and moonlight enjoyable.

The duchesse reclined on a very low lounging chair amidst a pile of cushions. She had on a loose tea-gown of cinnamon-coloured silk and black lace, a cigarette was between her lips, a black lace scarf framed in her curls of golden hair and her delicately-tinted face. She looked thirty instead of fifty in the dim soft light, and Bessie watched her with quite admiring wonder.

"How will you exist here, Hélène, without your usual string of admirers?" she asked presently:

The duchesse withdrew her cigarette for a moment and laughed softly.

"There will be others, *ma chère*," she said. "There always are. Believe me, it is a woman's own fault if she does not find amusement. Besides, I fancy that some of our Paris friends will follow us soon."

The countess rose and leant over the balcony, gazing down at the passing figures below. The moon had risen, and a flood of brilliant light poured itself over the rippling water where the ferry boats passed from side to side, or a barge lay moored against the banks. The hum of voices and laughter came to them with soft distinctness. The air was heavy with the scent of the pine woods.

Two figures were passing under the balcony. The countess, idly watching, saw only the old bent form of one man leaning on the stalwart protecting strength of another. They stopped at the entrance of the hotel. A rose, fastened in the bosom of her travelling dress and loosened by her leaning attitude, fell suddenly down, struck the hat of the younger man and rolled to his feet. He looked up. He could not distinguish her features, but she saw his distinctly in the brilliant moonlight. A sudden exclamation escaped her. She drew back, and the warm colour flushed her temples.

"What is it?" asked her friend curiously. She had heard the exclamation and she noted the sudden warmth and excitement of the countess's face.

"It is very singular—of all people—that he should be here," murmured Bessie.

"He—who?" asked the duchesse languidly.

"My English friend—the Earl of Amersley," she answered. "I think he must be staying at this hotel. He came in with some old man."

"Amersley—Amersley," murmured Madame de Valette. "Ah, I remember. The handsome Englishman who was at your first reception. The gods are kind, *ma chère*. He is worth cultivating."

"I wish I were quite sure," said Bessie. "Do you think we might ask for the visitors' book?"

"But certainly. Ring for Karl, and he will obtain it for us."

But when the courier was dispatched on that errand, and Bessie eagerly turned over the leaves of the book, she saw no such name as Lord Amersley.

At last her eyes fell on two signatures bracketed together, and she pointed them out to her friend.

"Look there," she said. "How odd he is. He has only written—'Paul Meredith, England'; and here is his friend—'Professor Franz Müller, Heidelberg.' He has dropped his title. I wonder why?"

"Perhaps he found it too expensive," said the duchesse tranquilly. "All Englishmen are eccentric—and mean."

"I am sure *he* is not," said Bessie with indignation. "I expect it is a whim. He wanted to be quiet, and foreigners make such a fuss over an English title. That was the name I knew him by in Australia."

"We will send and tell him we are here," said the duchesse with awakened interest. "Give Karl your card, and write on it our rooms, and a request to come up. There is no use in being conventional when one is travelling in a foreign country."

Bessie obeyed with alacrity. She was certainly not inclined to quarrel with fate for this piece of good-fortune. There was no other man of all her many acquaintances and admirers that she would have cared to see even had she had the choice. But Paul—ah! that was very different.

She had been obliged to conceal her disappointment and chagrin when Pharamond refused to take her to England, and now here, in this quiet, tranquil nook of lake and mountain, was the very person for whom she had experienced that disappointment.

Would he be pleased? Would he accept that abrupt invitation? It was something entirely novel for her to experience such restlessness and uncertainty as she did experience while awaiting that answer. But at last it came.

The duchesse watched her narrowly as she read those pencilled

lines. She saw the flush, the smile, the sudden change from anxiety to pleasure.

"He is coming," she said briefly.

The countess folded up the note. She did not offer it for her friend's perusal. "He will be here immediately," she said. Then she glanced down at her plain but beautifully-fitting travelling dress.

"I wish," she said, with some dissatisfaction, "that I had changed my gown."

"You look very well. You need not fear," said her friend, with an odd little smile. "You are one of the women, *ma chère* Bessie, who look best in severe and simple toilettes. Fripperies and fantasies do not become you. Has not Pharamond told you so?"

"I do not appreciate his tastes," said Bessie with some asperity.

The duchesse laughed softly and lit another cigarette. "That is a bad compliment to yourself," she said.

At this same instant the door of their *salon* was thrown back, and the attendant announced in mixed phraseology, "Monsieur, the Herr Meredix."

* * * * *

Paul came through the dimly-lit *salon* and on to the balcony where the two women were sitting. The duchesse greeted him with effusion, Bessie more quietly and cordially.

"I was so surprised to see you," she said; "I imagined you were in England."

"I am not very fond of England," he said. "I spent the early part of the season there; but I was glad to get away from it. I came here really because my old friend Müller was ordered to Ischl for his health. He is wonderfully better already."

"You are very faithful to your friends," said the countess softly. "Was not Professor Müller in Sydney when you were there?"

"Yes. He came to England about a year after I had left the colony. As for being faithful—well, I think friends are too rare in the world to be treated lightly. I have found few enough."

"How do you like Ischl, monsieur?" interposed Hélène de Valette. "We are but just arrived. Are there many people here?"

"I believe so, madame. I am delighted with the place, or

rather its surroundings. I have not much in common with its fashions and gaieties."

His eyes did not rest on hers despite the glance that wooed them. He was watching a boat moving slowly over the ripples of silvered water.

"It is very beautiful," he said, somewhat absently. "But for my own part I prefer the mountains."

The sharp eyes of the Duchesse de Valette were watching him intently.

"She is nothing to him," she reflected. "He scarcely even remembers her presence; but it is different with her. I wonder why he came?"

Indeed, Paul was wondering a little himself. Certainly inclination had very little to do with it, but he had been surprised, and Bessie's note had been somewhat urgent. A refusal might have seemed ungracious, and there really was no reason why he should not come. That was all.

"You and Countess Pharamond are old friends, are you not?" said Madame de Valette presently. "I met you at her reception, you remember. I thought it was very cruel of you to desert Paris so soon."

"Paris would neither miss me nor concern itself about me," said Paul. "I have really no acquaintances there. It was a mere accident that took me to the Countess Pharamond's reception. I think I mentioned to you that I had not even the honour of knowing who was to be my hostess."

"Yes; and I remember also your astonishment when I pointed her out to you. It is not often modern life affords us—situations. Everything is terribly monotonous in the world. Do you not think so, monsieur?"

He had taken a chair between the two women—he was nearer to the duchesse than to Bessie. She had grown strangely embarrassed, and was thankful that her friend seemed inclined to take conversation off her hands.

Madame de Valette could be charmingly gay and witty when she liked, and, though Paul found it somewhat of an effort to respond, he managed to talk to her more freely than he could have done to the Countess Pharamond.

He was keenly conscious of the emotions and memories caused by the latter. He dreaded and yet longed to hear that one name

from her lips. But Bessie was silent, and made no allusion whatever to those years in Australia.

This sudden and unexpected meeting had made her so strangely glad that she could only marvel at her own content. She, who had scoffed and mocked at sentiment all her life, was only conscious now of the sweetness of the pine-scented air, the silvery ripples on the water, the soft gleam of starlight, the deep rich tones of one voice sounding ever and again through the gathering dusk. She could frame no other wish or desire but that the peace and sorcery of that hour might last and linger on, unchanged and undisturbed.

She wished he would look less sad and grave. Was it because he still remembered that one brief passion? Were men really so faithful in their memories and their loves? She had never believed it in her life; she did not *want* to believe it now.

With an effort she roused herself and joined in the conversation. She was strangely quiet and gentle. They spoke of music, art, many things that were quite impersonal and seemed better suited to the scenes and the solitude around than the idle chatter of society. They discussed plans for the morrow, and she was vaguely conscious of a new and dawning interest in the ensuing days and weeks.

At last Paul rose to take leave of them. Nearly an hour had passed. The duchesse smiled softly to herself as she watched his tall figure move through the *salon*. Then she glanced at the absorbed face of her friend.

"*Le diable est entré*," she thought.

CHAPTER VIII.

SNAres AND VICTIMS.

A WEEK had passed. It had been full of pleasure, amusement, sunshine. It seemed to the Countess Pharamond at once the happiest and most innocent time she had ever known. She had grown to love the quaint little town, the gleam of the water under the old grey bridge—the wood-clothed hills—the scent of the pines—the dusky, quiet roadways—the far-off glitter of the glaciers—the great snow-crowned heights where the clouds rested, and the summer rains fell like drifting mists.

There were many people always about them, and endless ex-

cursions and amusements planned and carried out; driving parties, boating parties, water picnics—all the diversions that society can invent, and wealth accomplish.

Almost against his will Paul found himself entangled in a perfect network of obligations and engagements. By common consent—or the skill of Hélène de Valette—he was acknowledged as the friend and escort of the Countess Pharamond, and no party where she was present was considered complete unless he was there also.

It may be owing to man's clumsier or less-suspecting nature that he rarely discerns the subtle threads of entanglement which women weave about his life until those threads have grown strong as steel, and intricate as a problem. Then the only remedy is a forcible one—the cutting sharply asunder the Gordian knot that no manly fingers are deft enough, or patient enough, to unweave.

To do that, however, requires a nature more courageous and—to their honour be it said—more brutal, than most men possess. A man will do many things, foolhardy, reckless, desperate, but he does not willingly like to insult a woman, or draw forth her tears and reproaches. Many men drift into intricacies and entanglements from mere carelessness and indifference. They never *intend* to let things go too far—that is to say to become dangerous or unpleasant; but perhaps they reckon without their partner in the game. As no two people love equally, so no two persons can pretend an equal knowledge of each other's nature or intentions.

The game of flirtation as instituted by society is no doubt a very interesting and amusing occupation, but it is well to be very exact in its definition, and very scrupulous in drawing the line between fancy and feeling.

To Paul all women had become so impersonal and so indifferent that he never gave a serious thought to any one of them. The Countess Pharamond was no more to him than Madame de Valette, or any of the pretty, foolish butterflies of the Parisian world who had fluttered here in her wake.

They dressed and laughed, and chirped and chattered, and made pretty notes of colour under the dark pine boughs, or floating over the bright Traun water, or going to and from the *Trinkhalle*, sipping from their monogrammed glasses, and discussing the

seriousness of "complaints" and the results of the *Cur* in the same breath as the latest fashion, or the newest scandal, or the forthcoming amusements of the day.

The Countess Pharamond was as much a butterfly and an idler in Paul's eyes as any of these women. He wished she would not insist so much on his accompanying their pleasure parties, he never found them even amusing, and it seemed to him that mountain solitudes and forest glades and blue lake waters were all somewhat desecrated and coarsened by the introduction of chattering *mondaines* and foolish Parisian *gommeux*, and the cigarette smoke and champagne sparkle of most of these excursions. Society always takes its world with it, just as it takes its toilettes and its luncheon baskets, and the presence of that world makes simplicity and natural enjoyment alike impossible. But had Paul been less absorbed by that great sorrow which for him had darkened all life, and less unsuspecting as regarded the wiles of women and his own attraction for them, he could not have failed to observe the difference in the Countess Pharamond's manner to himself, and to all other men.

Beneath her frivolous exterior, her vanity, and her worldliness there lived the possibility of a great and strong and utterly reckless passion. She herself had not yet recognized the fact. She had always considered herself too cold to care for any man with that utter self-forgetfulness which makes love at once so generous, and so exacting. Vanity and ambition had led to her marriage with Pharamond. That marriage had given her all she had any right to expect, but the sneers, and covert insults, and indifference of her husband were like smarting wounds, at once painful and humiliating. The fact of having to keep them concealed even from the eyes of her dearest friend did not help to heal them. Only in perpetual distraction and excitement could she find even temporary forgetfulness, and this sudden peace, this soft and subtle, and seemingly most innocent friendship, was the only rest her mind had known, or her untroubled nature experienced for many years.

It was happiness only to know as each new day dawned, and her eyes opened to greet it, that some one in whom her own life felt interest, some one whose mere presence meant all the sunshine of the day, would be with her, near her; in sight of glance, and in sense of sound.

She neither sought, nor cared, nor thought of anything else while the days glided into weeks, and the sweet tranquil hours made up for her a sum of perfect content.

The handsome grave-faced Englishman was not popular. He was too melancholy, and too absorbed, and too serious. No one grudged the Countess Pharamond her conquest, or made any attempt to dispute it with her. As for Hélène de Valette she watched proceedings with a little amusement, and a great deal of malicious pleasure.

Pharamond had forsworn a lengthy and—she had dreamed it—a life-long allegiance to herself, and she had never forgiven him. He had promised to keep her *au courant* with every phase and incident of his life—and instead of doing so had returned from his travels round the world with another woman as his wife—returned to find her widowed, free, rich, and yet unable to enjoy any of those advantages in just the one way she had determined upon enjoying them.

If she had cared for any one in her heartless, frivolous life, she had cared for Maxime de Pharamond, and she was furious at finding herself supplanted. She soon discovered, however, that it would be perfectly possible to revenge herself for the slight she had suffered, and that her best method of taking such vengeance was to make a friend of her unconscious rival.

Bessie herself was quite ignorant of the manner in which she lent herself to her friend's schemes and projects. Hélène in her heart pronounced her stupid; but she was really not at all stupid—only unsuspicuous. The constant praise and subtle flatteries respecting Paul which Madame de Valette whispered daily in her ears, were too pleasant for denial on her part. But no one knew better than herself how cold and indifferent he really was: courteous, gentle, considerate, unselfish, but in vain did she look for warmth of interest, for any special sign of regard, for any word of sentiment, or any look of admiration.

It annoyed her sometimes when she looked specially charming, or was arrayed in the most becoming of toilettes, to receive neither notice nor flattery from just the one voice that would have made either of value. But no man is so absorbed, so indifferent, so blind to the beauty and attractions of all women, as the man who loves and remembers *one*.

Paul was constantly wooed to forgetfulness, but every art and

allurement were wasted on that chill and courteous indifference which made an impassible barrier between the present and the past.

He knew in his inmost heart that never again for him would any woman's love seem worth the winning, any woman's life give peace or joy or forgetfulness to his own. But this he could not tell them, and this they certainly would not have believed.

In this world the deep natures always suffer, where the shallow ones enjoy.

Müller, looking on at the pretty social comedies being played before his eyes in the heart of those green valleys, found himself not a little interested and amused. He saw further than Paul himself, and he read the Countess Pharamond as he would have read an open book.

Long ago he had taken the measurement of her character, and put her down as utterly selfish, and utterly unscrupulous. But he knew that to such a character and such a nature passion is both a dangerous and dominating influence.

When he sauntered by Paul's side in the cool dusky evenings and noticed how invariably she joined them, he began to watch her with special, and by no means flattering attention.

Her words were light and gay, her manner charming as that mingling of English seriousness with French art could make it, but he noticed her face, and words were of little account. The look that would flash into those cold blue eyes of hers spoke more eloquently than ever she imagined. The flush and softness of her face, the constraint of her manner, its rapid changes from coquetry to pleading, from lightness to appeal, from mirth to gravity, were all studied and criticized by the old German.

Instinctively she felt he was not her friend, that between them there was a spirit of antagonism. He appraised her with unflattering accuracy, and he let her know that he did so. He spoke openly of the wiles and follies and vices of women; the rarity of truth and honour and sincerity in their characters. He believed that in almost all women the greatest passion would be subordinate to self-interest, and he did not hesitate to say so.

Paul felt almost vexed sometimes at his blunt and unflattering denunciations, but then Paul was far from recognizing a danger to himself in the open and avowed friendship of the Countess Pharamond. Müller knew that no passion is so cruel as that

passion which only wins indifference, and yet can afford to wait with slow untiring patience for its end; or its revenge. He recognized in the Countess Pharamond possibilities of which she herself was unconscious, but which circumstances would ripen into form and shape, as heat moulds iron. Of all classes of women there was none that he had so much reason to detest as the woman who, with hot and cruel passion, pursues the object of her fancy as the tigress its prey, never relenting or ceasing such pursuit till its object is secured.

To the woman who can wait with patience, it is almost always possible to win the race at last. Perhaps it is fortunate for men that very few possess such patience, especially when their feelings are aroused. When they do he has small chance of escape, especially if to that one virtue they also add the—vice—of being perfectly unscrupulous.

It was not to be wondered at, therefore, if Müller disliked Bessie, being possessed of opinions so unflattering respecting her sex and herself.

In the long excursions they planned and carried out he never joined. He was not by disposition or nature fitted for society, and he bluntly said so.

He loved best the solitude of woods and river ; to lie idly in the soft grass of the meadows, or chat to the ferrymen and bargemen of their lives and duties. The idle gossip and petty babble of the men and women who sauntered under the trees or passed in their chairs to the *Trinkhalle* seemed foolish and senseless to him. He was a little angry sometimes that Paul had suffered himself to be drawn into it, but he could not help acknowledging it would have been impossible to quite avoid it.

Society is a quicksand in which, if you place only one foot, you may find yourself drawn bodily down ere you are aware of your danger, or awaken to the fact that one vigorous struggle might have freed you.

So Müller watched and observed, and said very little.

Paul was no longer his pupil and associate. He was a man with the world at his feet, and to that world he owed certain obligations. Suffering and poverty and sorrow had been his early teachers. It remained to be seen what lessons he would learn from the perils of prosperity, the flattery of a world he might influence or coerce, the homage paid no longer to an

obscure singer who wooed fame, but to the personality of a man who had won fortune, and inherited the birthright and burden of honour and responsibility.

"What will he make of his life?" thought Müller sadly. "Little enough, I often fear. How that one other life would have altered and affected his now: her influence and companionship, her mind and gifts, her love and devotion. Truly Fate is hard, and my old heart grows bitter sometimes as I look at that changed face. My poor Paul!"

(*To be continued.*)

A Pilgrimage to Lourdes.

THE London season was fast drawing to a close. How tired I was of it, with its dreary round of unprofitable frivolity! I felt that all indeed was vanity and vexation of spirit; man pleased me not. Somehow, I suppose, things had gone wrong with me; I was out of sorts, for everything seemed empty. The "At Homes" bored me to death, meeting the same people time after time; the same empty greetings—having to listen to, and appear to be amused by the same songs, the same old jokes—having to be civil, when I felt inclined to be rude. The butterflies of fashion rubbed me the wrong way—so I determined to fly their haunts. Where could I turn for comfort? Where hide myself awhile and live like a hermit, "far from the madding crowd?"

For many days fruitlessly I racked my brain, trying to think of some secluded spot, where I might be as sad and look as sad as I liked, then suddenly it flashed across my brain—"A Pilgrimage to Lourdes." I had often wondered if prayerful petition to *Notre Dame* would cure maladies of the heart and of the soul—for we have all heard of miraculous physical recoveries—so I determined to put it to the test and go there. Then, acting on impulse, as is my custom, I searched out a few old garments, the reverse of fashionable, neither elegant nor becoming; chiefly of sable hue—the right thing for a pilgrim—threw them pell-mell into my gladstone, donned a long travelling cloak, sent for a hansom and drove off to St. Katherine's Wharf, thinking a sea journey would benefit my health. On arriving, an official marshalled me into the waiting-room, where some of my fellow-passengers to be were collected; they hardly looked promising, I thought, but, I reasoned, appearances are deceptive. Having already a "Cook's ticket" to Bordeaux and the Pyrenees, I went straight on board the "Lapwing," which presently steamed from her moorings and went gaily down the Thames, passing on her way the grand new suspension bridge in course of erection at London Bridge, the noble docks, the Isle of Dogs, Greenwich—

where my eyes fondly lingered, as I thought of the whitebait dinners I had enjoyed there—Rosherville, Gravesend, Tilbury Fort and Sheerness, until we finally found ourselves in the Channel, steering for the North Foreland, which we rounded about nine, when I shortly retired to my bunk, which was too short for me—so narrow, so high—and oh, the stuffy atmosphere! it seemed to suffocate me and banish sleep, so that I was wide awake when, about one o'clock, I guessed from the grating of the vessel that she had grounded, and discovered ere long, from the hurried whispers of the steward and stewardess, that our noble captain had landed us safely on the Goodwin Sands. Fortunately all the lady passengers were asleep save myself, in blissful ignorance of our position and of the fact that if the wind rose and the sea roughened our situation would become very serious; that the vessel might go to pieces, and we poor creatures become food for fishes. One lady I had noticed, of extremely generous proportions, would have satisfied a whale, and even in that anxious moment I could not help wondering what sort of fish would get her, and how he would like his meal. But hark! a distant sound of corks told me of brandies and sodas, and brandies and sodas told me that the masculine element had not retired to their bunks; then I wondered how they'd behave in case of danger, and having to take to the boats, which I knew well is always attended with considerable risk. I did not get out of my bunk, though sorely tempted to do so, but lay trembling, fearing the worst. After awhile, as nothing dreadful happened, and I was very much overwrought and fatigued, somehow I must have fallen asleep, for when I awoke the sun was shining, my sister passengers were all busy over their morning toilet, and everything looked bright. Thanks to a kind Providence and rising tide, we had got off at six a.m., no one the worse, and doubly happy at our escape. If it had not been the one topic of conversation over breakfast, I might have thought it had been a dream.

It was such a lovely morning as we stood on the deck of the vessel, watching the white foam, as it rushed right and left of us, and the million sparkles, as the sunlight glinted on the gently undulating waves! We watched the porpoises rolling about ahead of us, always in couples. I wondered if they were mated and matched all right, and what the marriage laws were in porpoise

land—I thought there was a certain skittishness about one Mrs. Porpoise, but her lord and master kept a good look out.

Never did I have a merrier few days, thanks to Hibernian influence. There was a young Irishman on board who kept us all alive—songs all day and in the evening too, as we sat, some on deck chairs, others at our feet, leaning against the vessel's side as we skimmed along, the phosphorescent sparkles gleaming on the dark waves ; then we danced “by the light o' the moon.” There was no music, but what did that matter ? Some whistled while the others danced, and “others” whistled while the “somes” danced ; then some light refreshment and “good night.”

On Monday morning our French pilot came on board, as we steamed into the Gironde, to steer us up the river, at the mouth of which we passed the charming watering-place of Royan on the one hand, and the lighthouse of Le Verdon on the other. Further on was Pauillac—an important seaport—the Atlantic steamers do not ascend higher ; it is also the chief export station for the Médoc wines. A pleasant day we had, every one looking so happy, and forgetful of the ills of the voyage and the terrors of the Bay of Biscay.

At 7 p.m. we arrived at Bordeaux, one of the chief seaport towns of France, situated on the banks of the Garonne, which is a fine tidal river, but very much charged with mud, having few features of interest. Nothing can be finer than the view of the magnificent quay of Bordeaux, and the broad river, which abreast of the town is about a quarter of a mile in width, crowded with shipping, many of them three-mast vessels, up to the magnificent stone bridge of seventeen arches, the finest in France.

I rested for the night at the Hôtel des Ambassadeurs, thankful to find myself once more on *terra firma*. Among the delicacies furnished for my dinner were royans (the local name for sardine), fresh from the sea, ceps (a mushroom cooked in oil), and mûrines (a tiny bird about the size of a lark). The market also supplies ortolans, caught near Agen and along the foot of the Pyrenees.

The commercial importance of Bordeaux is due to its situation on a fine navigable river. It can boast of handsome buildings of varied architecture, and no city in Europe can display a more splendid water front. The old town of narrow though populous streets is separated from the north or more modern quarter, consisting of wide openings and broad streets. It is somewhat a

sprawling city to get over on foot, but omnibuses and *fiacres* are abundant. There is a fine cathedral of St. André, built by the English; the Palais Galien, ruins of the Howard Palace, the theatre—which is one of the oldest and most celebrated in France, built about the time of Louis XIV.—and the museum, containing some grand pictures, all well worth a visit. Nor must I forget to mention the Central Market, supplied with the choicest fruits, flowers and vegetables—all so temptingly arranged. The market women were picturesquely attired in short black or red petticoats, displaying their neat woollen hose and wooden *sabots*. They wear high white caps stiffly starched, white or coloured kerchiefs pinned across the bosom, and some wore richly-chased gold earrings, probably heirlooms.

But *à Lourdes! à Lourdes!* After a hearty meal, once more on the road to the terminus, a considerable distance from the town and the one for the Spanish frontier, which is to take me to Pau via Dax, a journey of from five to six hours.

Immediately after leaving the station of St. Jean we entered the monotonous sandy district extending south, covered with fir trees, heather and broom, and known by the name of Les Landes. I noticed that all the fir trees were stripped of the bark, here and there, and small tin cups fixed beneath, into which the resin flows in the liquid state of turpentine from the incision, and when full collected. When the incision begins to heal, a fresh one is made above it, and so on to a great height. The old trees seem thus converted into fluted columns. Beyond Puzoo, the fertility of the plain, the watercourses, the luxuriant festoons of the vines, and the magnificent view of the Pyrenean range, give interest to this portion of the route. The situation of Pau is, perhaps, scarcely surpassed by that of any town in France, its magnificent view over the chain of the West Pyrenees reminding me greatly of that from the terrace at Dinan, and also from the platform at Berne. The range of the Pyrenees presents a strikingly beautiful and varied outline of peaks, cones and ridges, often cut like a saw, rising darkly outlined against the southern horizon.

The most conspicuous and interesting building in the town is the Castle, the birthplace of Henri Quatre. The moat and the ground round the castle are laid out in pleasant walks, and the interior (open to the public every day) is replete with historical interest.

But à Lourdes! à Lourdes! The railway from Pau passes through a plain of considerable width nearly covered with maize and flax. Owing to the return of a pilgrimage from Beteram, our transit was not very rapid, and our arrival in consequence considerably delayed. The train was crowded to suffocation with all sorts and conditions of pilgrims, who mostly seemed known to one another. Some got out on the way occasionally to stretch their cramped limbs, others to chat with their friends, or to drink from the streams, the pace at which we were going threatening no danger to these mild diversions.

One picturesque village succeeded another; there was something more interesting in the varying forms of the mountains which we were gradually approaching, as they loomed in purple grandeur against the clear azure of the evening sky, forming a majestic background to the marble white churches and the houses of Lourdes, where we had at length arrived.

Such confusion, such a crowd, such a babel I have never witnessed or heard before. Imagine several thousand pilgrims, nearly every one loaded with a huge basket, of the ancient market type with flaps, containing provisions for themselves and family for a three days' pilgrimage! This doubtless provided sustenance for their own bodies—but oh! my sufferings!

Baskets in my face, baskets in my back, baskets to the right of me, baskets to the left of me, baskets everywhere! Shall I ever forget that day? Bruised, dusty, dazed, in an almost helpless condition, I was further assaulted by about a dozen gamines of the dirtiest and raggedest type, who abused and fought with each other over my gladstone and rugs, who was to have them, one tearing them one way, one another, utterly regardless of my gesticulations and rage.

I found all the hotels full, the streets a surging mass of humanity, flying pell-mell along in all directions, luggage-laden fiacres scattering them mercilessly about. Bells ringing on the horses, the clattering of their hoofs on the small stones, the cracking of whips, the hoarse cry of vendors selling bongies and bouquets for the Virgin, which were thrust in my face at every turn, was confusing. One pleasing feature was the delicious smell of vanilla, the pods of which men sold in little bundles, crying “Vanille, vanille,” as they went along.

At last, at one hotel the kind proprietor promised me a room

for that night on the fourth *étage*; I was told I must not dine, so I hastily swallowed a cup of coffee by way of refreshment, to be in time to join the "procession" (it was now seven o'clock), and off I went to the far-famed "Grotto de la Vierge," the rendezvous of the pilgrims who wished to invoke the aid of the Virgin.

I found myself among countless thousands of men and women, all in a state of hopeless confusion, each one carrying a lighted *bougie*. One was placed in my hand, and having been told that I must join my own particular *pèlerinage*, I started to try and find it. Each *pèlerinage* consists of about one thousand persons wearing a cross of distinctive colour and shape; thus, the members of one *pèlerinage* wear red crosses, those of another green, and so on, and suggests a puzzle, getting them all in their places; my badge being a red one, I looked about wildly for my comrades; to find them was no easy task among all the flaming *bougies* and struggling pilgrims; at last I discovered them, and we got into something like order, and off we marched, chanting the *Ave Maria*.

I was just beginning to enter into the spirit of the thing, when I heard a frizzing noise in the region of the back of my head, accompanied by a strong smell of hair singeing, when I happily discovered, just in time, that an old lady behind me (who had but one eye) had set fire with her candle to my back hair, and to the lace on my hat. Fearing a recurrence of this and a greater conflagration, I withdrew from the procession, and as an on-looker could better appreciate a demonstration at once unique and wonderful. For miles the procession wound itself among the zigzag paths that creep up the face of the mountain, having the appearance of a huge fiery serpent, ever changing and with endless continuity, the deep tones of the men's voices a fitting accompaniment to such a scene. This singing and processioning kept on far into the small hours, the churches being illuminated with numerous rows of lights outside, and service going on all through the night. At last, footsore and weary, I returned to my room on the fourth *étage* and retired to rest, but not, alas! to sleep—Somnus was shy and wooed me not; I suppose my brain was over-excited with all the strange sights and sounds I had seen and heard that day, and my resting-place was not of the cleanest or most comfortable. Alphonse Karr has said "that we do not travel for the sake of travelling but for the sake of having

travelled ;" the distinction is a nice one—I began to agree with him.

Up early next morning to explore. Lourdes is beautiful, and with a beauty all its own. Situated in the heart of the Pyrenees, encircled by high peaks and ridges which rise on all sides, while in the foreground the Gave rushes and tumbles along, and meets one at every turn, its banks beautifully fringed with trees. In the distance is the castle, once the key to the valley of Lavedon, commanding the four roads which unite here from Tarbes, Bagnères, Argeley and Pau; it is now used as a barrack. Froissart gives a long account of its varied fortunes, which render this feudal fortress interesting. After inspecting it I went to see Calvary; a winding zigzag path leads up a steep slope, on the summit of which is a large cross with a life-size figure of the Saviour on it in marble; the pure whiteness of this figure is thrown up vividly by the green backgrounds. Beyond the Gave, at a short distance, is the famous "Grotto de la Vierge," which has become a place of pilgrimage since 1858, in consequence of the declaration of a girl, Marie Bernadette Soubirous, that the Virgin had several times appeared to her; the girl subsequently became ill and was taken care of by the Urseline nuns of Neaers until 1879, when she died. The spring, which was said to have burst forth out of the rock at the time of the first apparition in 1858, is accounted to have miraculous healing powers.

This story is well shown in a cleverly painted panorama, which represents Lourdes as it was at that time in its primitive state, destitute of houses or churches; the young girl is depicted in her simple peasant's dress, kneeling in prayer, a lighted *bougie* in her hand, burnt down to the flesh, and yet by some miraculous intervention of Providence her hand was not even scorched. When the apparition of the Virgin appeared to her and said, "*Allez boire à la fontaine et vous y lavez,*"—at these words water gushed from the rock which was bare. The story goes that the girl replied, "I cannot drink; it is muddy," when it instantly became of a crystal clearness. Eighteen times the apparition of the Virgin appeared to her and said, "Build churches to me, and let the sick and the weary come and pray to me, and walk in single file procession together, and I will intercede for them—to God the Father to heal them," &c.

In a recess of the Grotto there is a life-size figure of the Virgin

in white drapery, the beautiful face uplifted, the hands clasped in prayer. This statue is surrounded by hundreds of crutches and artificial supports, cork legs, surgical boots, irons for the legs, &c., which have been cast off from time to time by the pilgrims, who are said to have regained the use of their limbs and been restored to health. In another recess of the Grotto is a Communion-table with the usual rich appointments, at the back of which, in a huge metal stand, are hundreds of wax candles arranged in tiers, and further back some of the height of an average English-woman. These Leviathan candles are all gifts to the Virgin from the pilgrims, and are kept alight day and night. Holy Communion is given at stated hours, when people are allowed to enter the Grotto, which at other times is railed off.

The pilgrims arrive in countless numbers from the beginning of May till the end of October, from all parts of the world; some of the costumes are very quaint, those from Finisterre particularly. The short full black skirts, heavily gathered or gauged at the waist, bright coloured aprons of orange, green and crimson, and the pretty muslin Bretonne caps, varied in shape—some like a baby's old-fashioned cap with embroidered crown, some with stiffly-starched flaps, and others with a coronet, but all entirely covering the hair. Some of them wore, in place of the cap, a gay-coloured handkerchief twisted round the knob of hair worn low on the neck. The types were various—the women *blonde* and *brunette*. I noticed some of the old women had fine faces, like those seen in Dutch pictures, lined and wrinkled, but, nevertheless, most interesting, showing they had struggled bravely through a hard life. Most of them looked prematurely old, and few (even of the young) I found beautiful. Of the diseased and afflicted, alas, how many! from the infant in its cradle to the paralyzed and aged, tottering on the brink of the grave. It was painful enough to see the old suffering, but touching in the extreme to watch the poor little creatures of a few months old, blind or horribly diseased, lying in their cradles quite still, their tiny white faces turned heavenward, in pathetic resignation, the sightless eyes of some seeming to implore the intercession of the Holy Mother. One child particularly attracted my attention, as it was always brought veiled to the shrine. On one occasion I had the temerity to lift the veil, and oh, horror! its poor face was an indistinguishable mass of corruption, each feature seeming to

be merged in the other—leprosy, I suppose; its constant wailings were of a most heart-rending description.

The helpless are brought from the hospital in wheel chairs, or on stretchers, and placed in front of the Grotto, where every one kneeling supplicates the intercession of the Virgin with God the Father, to heal and bring comfort to the suffering, the sorrowful and the afflicted. Here people congregate day and night, prostrating themselves on the ground. As soon as one set of pilgrims depart, another arrives. The miraculous cures mostly take place on emerging from the baths, or *épiscènes* of holy water, which are free, and built in well and neatly-constructed stone buildings near to the Grotto, arranged on one side for men and the other for women. The hours of admission are 8 to 11 a.m. and 3 to 5 p.m. There are hundreds always waiting outside...

The diseased and healthy alike enter one small room to undress. A curtain separates this *cabinet de toilette* from the bath, which is partly filled with holy water that is carried in pipes from the rock whence it flows, and is rarely changed in the day. The floor is of stone, without rugs or carpet. When disrobed, two women attendants put a coarse kind of linen wrap upon me; each took a hand and conducted me to the bath, into which I descended by steps, while my attendants said a prayer asking the Virgin to have pity upon me, and to grant my prayer, &c. Owing to the efficacy of the water, a minute's immersion is all that is necessary, and contagion has never been known to take place. On emerging (I had happily the first dip), I noticed the wrap I had worn was wrung out for the next bather, and so on, one doing duty, I suppose, for the whole morning, the first comer only having a dry one. Towels were an unknown luxury; it would seem people were expected to have their pocket-handkerchiefs convenient. I must mention that in the bath-house I saw several English ladies side by side with the "Sisters" attending on the invalids. One charming lady, dressed in widow's weeds, told me she had lived for thirty years in Lourdes, latterly devoting herself to this work.

I regret to say that I had not the satisfaction of seeing a cure *de mes propres yeux*, although I heard on several occasions cries of, "*Un guérison, un guérison!*" and saw a woman borne along among the crowd, being besieged with questions as to her malady and recovery, but I never found it possible to approach her,

owing to the crowd. There I heard more cures of nervous disorders—faith is the one thing needful—but I was told the percentage of those who are cured is small—thirty in a thousand—if even so many. I certainly read through an immense volume of records which is kept in a small building facing the Basilisk Church, under strict medical surveillance, which gives accounts of recoveries from ailments that for years had baffled medical skill.

The churches are very handsome and nicely decorated ; one, the Basilisk, has its walls tiled from ceiling to floor with tablets of *reconnaissance*, for both physical and mental support, some very beautiful, and all worded with heartfelt expression of deep love and gratitude to the Virgin.

Lourdes owes its prosperity to this miraculous fountain of water, the gift of the Virgin. Its streets are full of shops and booths for the sale of images, souvenirs, and *objets de pitié*. Hotels, cafés, and lodging-houses abound. The railway is choked with excursion trains and the inns with visitors. Broken wine bottles, chicken bones, and greasy paper strewn about detract much from the charm of this interesting place. The pilgrims lead an *al fresco* life and mostly sleep in the churches, which are open all night. I was cautioned to carry my money in a bag and suspend it round my neck, and *never* to let it out of my sight, the eighth commandment not being much respected there. This applied not to the residents of Lourdes but to some of the “visitors.”

One night, feeling very wakeful, perhaps because the moon was shining into my room—round, bright, resplendent—I got up, and hastily dressing made my way down to the Grotto, no uncommon thing to do at Lourdes at midnight. I found many there, all engaged in earnest prayer. My attention was shortly attracted—I was perhaps not such a devout pilgrim as those around me—by a little boy, with a face that Murillo would have loved to paint—an exquisite piece of Nature’s handiwork, nothing purer or lovelier had I ever seen. He was in rags, and kneeling, the perfect face upturned in prayer, the broad lovely brow, the dark liquid eyes, the sensitive quivering little mouth ! I could not turn my eyes from the charming face ; my riveted gaze attracted his, when I beckoned him to me and gave him a handful of sous. He returned to his place and again occupied himself with his devotions. His piety however, I fear, was only

simulated, as later on I saw him turning out his pockets for the benefit of his relations, who appeared to be in good circumstances—so I concluded that they used this beautiful child as a decoy-duck.

The walks and drives are lovely, varied and close at hand. For miles I used to walk through the pine-scented woods, taking my luncheon in a little basket. Lourdes lies low, and is very hot, at least it was when I was there in "sweet September," and I was glad to find shelter from the sun under the feathery trees, and to lie down on the soft cool mosses in the "chequered" shade made by the young green foliage, broken here and there by clumps of dark blue wild flowers and wood sorrel; and in the evening, when the sun had gone down, leaving the sky in a glow of crimson and purple glory, I used to walk along the mountain side, the air feeling so balmy and delicious as it blew past me, acting like a tonic on my jaded nerves. The roads are excellent everywhere, and there is nothing to fear for a woman walking alone. Here you meet the peasant wending his or her way home with the friend and help of the family—a donkey, mostly heavily laden—and the cows being driven to their stalls for the night, or a gentle "Sister" returning from some mission of mercy. All seemed peace and rest. Here and there, shining like a star in the darkly wooded mountain, a light to the Virgin. The days indeed seemed all too short, for my pilgrimage was over, my time was drawing to an end.

I was anxious before leaving to visit Cauterets, one of the chief watering-places of the Pyrenees, and Pierfitte is the best starting point. There is a branch railway from Lourdes to Pierfitte, whence the remainder of the journey must be done by road. Being, however, joined by a party of three, I thought it better to hire a *fiacre* with four horses from Lourdes, and we started at seven a.m. It was a terribly boisterous morning—we could scarcely keep our hats on, but were fortunately provided with plenty of rugs, umbrellas and waterproofs, as in the mountains a storm soon springs up, and often with terrible fury. We were soon in the heart of the mountains, but the valley continues stern and rocky, showing marks in its gashed sides and rock-strewn bottom of the fury of the torrents. This wild and desolate road, however, leads into what has been called the Paradise of Argelés, where the valley expands into a wide basin renowned for its picturesque beauty,

fertility and cultivation, ranking among the finest in the Pyrenees. We passed the conspicuous dismantled tower of Vidalos, which, rising in the midst of the valley, conceals the village behind it. Beyond Argelés we passed the ancient abbey of St. Savin, on the site of a Roman villa endowed by Charlemagne, destroyed and rebuilt 945, long sequestered, but now restored. The view from the Convent garden is beautiful ; on the opposite side of the valley of Argelés are the ruins of the Château of Beaucens, one of the finest in the Pyrenees.

We next arrived at Pierfitte, a village whose population seemed to live by begging. The whole way now to Cauterets lies through a narrow gorge, where the cheerful beauty of the lower valley gives place to savage grandeur. A splendid carriage road, which our *cocher* informed us took four years to complete, is carried through it, rising immediately behind Pierfitte, before it penetrates into the defile, in well-contrived zig-zags either elevated on terraces of masonry or cut out of the rock ; it is a grand piece of engineering. At a short distance from the mouth of the gorge, the view looking back is peculiarly beautiful, from the contrast of rugged, gloomy wilderness in the foreground with the sunny richness beyond of groves, pastures, and corn-fields. We met the Gave now and again tumbling away, sometimes in a long rapid, which frets its waters into foam. Then there was a slight opening in the valley, and a tall, pointed mountain appears at its extremity clad in firs ; at its foot lay Cauterets, concealed from view until the road reached close upon it. It was now eleven o'clock, when we drove to a hotel fully prepared to do justice to our *déjeuner*. It is true we had feasted our eyes with the charming scenery we had passed through, but that would not fortify us for a long day's exploring. The *déjeuner* turned out a failure—the food provided very poor, consisting of thin soup, hard boiled eggs and radishes, and one dish of very tough meat ; but we made up with some good wine and biscuits.

Cauterets, though in a spot so remote and elevated (3,058 feet above the sea), with savage mountains encircling it and over-hanging its roofs with their peaks and pine forests, has quite a townish air, with an octroi at its entrance, paved streets, fine hotels, and lodging-houses, and in the centre an irregular market-place. There is a casino standing in spacious and charmingly laid-out grounds, very extensive, almost like a park ; and close

by are shops, containing all kinds of rich and tempting articles for sale, in china, jewellery, wearing apparel, &c. The mineral springs are sulphurous and boiling hot ; they are said to present in their strength, warmth and qualities, an epitome of almost all the sulphurous sources scattered over the Pyrenees. The season was over now, and the "Établissement des Œufs" closed ; but I was told that in the season the road is thronged with sour-faced invalids ; peasant women in red *capulets* mingle with Paris dandies in white *bérets* and red Bearnese sashes (*à la mode des Bains*), ecclesiastics in broad-brimmed hats, Capuchin monks in the brown woollen costume of their order, and Spaniards of swarthy visage and stately gait, their heads swathed in mottled handkerchiefs, who from six to eight in the morning repair to "La Railliere," the principal spring on the banks of the Gave. During the day we hired a carriage, as we were advised to visit "La Cascade ;" it was a magnificent drive, but terrible work for the poor horses, always ascending. The steep precipices on either side are bare, except where seamed with lines of straggling fir trees, alternating with streams of fallen rock ; at last we arrived at a small hut, where we alighted and crossed a wooden bridge where we got a fine view of the splendid fall, the whole body of water discharged from the "Lac de Gaube" tumbling from a considerable height. By the time we returned it was nearly seven o'clock, and the hour appointed for our homeward journey to Lourdes. As it was now evening and very chilly, our *cocher* suggested closing the carriage, but this we declined ; we cuddled ourselves up in our wraps and in delightful anticipations, thinking of the new impressions we should take of the same route, under a different aspect ; we had seen the beautiful panorama by daylight, how much more beautiful would it appear to us now !—the shades of evening were fast falling, the full September moon would soon be rising, casting her soft light around. But one by one we fell fast asleep, the result of the sharp mountain air, the regular movement of the carriage, and the seductive warmth of our wraps ; each one ridiculed the other as he or she succumbed to the overpowering sleepiness which overtook us each in turn, our heads all nodding in different directions ; once or twice I awoke with a start, and with that sense of guiltiness one generally feels when caught sleeping in the open. I saw my companions nodding, the pale light of the moon making their faces look

quite death-like ; this went on all the way, I awaking only as we stopped on the road to get water for the horses or *bougies* for our carriage lamps.

At last we rattled down the streets of Lourdes, all of us awake by now. Everything must have an end, and so did this day, though it contented me so well. I could have said with Faust, as he once did to the present moment, "Remain, thou art so beautiful." The morrow was my last in Lourdes. I got up feeling quite sad, put my few belongings together, had breakfast, and went to take farewell of the Grotto and its surroundings, wondering should I ever behold them again, and "if so, how so?" Who can tell if the intercession of the pure and holy-minded mother of Christ may be more efficacious than our own direct prayers? May not her gentle spirit be better fitted to approach God than mine? Who can tell? Certainly not we *fin de siècle* folk, who scoff at everything and believe in nothing, and have hardly any right to expect our prayers to be granted or our hopes fulfilled.

"Call not pain's teaching punishment : the fire
That lights a soul, even while it tortures, blesses ;
The sorrow that unmakes some old desire,
And on the same foundation builds a higher,
Hath more than joy for him who acquiesces."

Dr. Banister's Cure.

THE village of Blessingham was a quiet enough place till old Miss Jemmett died and left South Place to her godson, Dr. Robert Banister. It was nine miles from a railway station and a town ; it read yesterday's newspapers ; it received and despatched its letters but once daily. But it was content ; it was unambitious of notice ; it was satisfied with itself and its stay-at-home ways ; it was willing to bow in all things to the dictates of the Uttershaws at the Manor-house, and Sir James Uttershaw was perfectly happy. He was a great man ; he was monarch of all he surveyed ; he gave the tone to society ; he embodied public opinion ; what he said was law, what he did was applauded ; the vicarage leant upon him ; Vigo House and The Lodge and The Nest and Nutfield and Ivy Cottage all looked towards him ; whatever he did was right ; he was a little pope. Hitherto, South Place had been as subservient to the Manor-house as the other gentlemen's houses in the neighbourhood ; the Jemmetts had always known their place ; they had watched to see how the wind blew from the Manor-house ; they had followed the Uttershaws humbly, had paid court to them, had meekly taken lower places. But when old Miss Jemmett was carried out of South Place and Dr. Banister walked in, the whole order of things began to change. Apparently, the new inmate of South Place was an addition to the locality, and people rejoiced when they understood that Dr. Banister had quitted London and was come to reside amongst them permanently, and they prophesied that his coming would prove advantageous to them. Old Miss Jemmett had been an invalid for thirty years ; she had seen no company ; no one had ever been asked to break bread beneath her roof. But Dr. Robert Banister was two-and-thirty, handsome and wealthy, clever and sociable, and though South Place was a house of no great pretensions, it was quite large enough for luncheons and dinners and even little dances. Sir James Uttershaw called upon Dr. Banister and invited him to dinner ; the whole village followed his example. Sir James told some one that

he considered Dr. Banister an agreeable man, and that he was glad he had settled at Blessingham. All was harmony.

But this blissful state did not last long. Dr. Banister had retired from London, but he found that he could not withdraw from professional life. Young as he was, his reputation was high, and notwithstanding that Blessingham was half a day's journey from the metropolis, that it was nine miles from a railway station, and that it possessed neither hotels nor restaurants, patients continued to flock around him, and the doctor's consulting room at South Place was daily thronged, as it had been in the days when it was situated in Cavendish Square. Naturally enough, the aspect of the village soon changed. An enterprising builder erected a large and comfortable hotel ; rows of lodging-houses followed ; a tennis ground was made for the sons and daughters of invalids ; a club arose ; handsome shops sprang up ; a promenade was paved and planted and a band was introduced ; a hideous iron church was run up for the accommodation of visitors ; a pert young surgeon hoisted a brass plate and was diligent in setting broken bones and curing measles and bronchitis ; a proposal was even submitted to Parliament for extending the railway and making a station at Blessingham itself. The place was altogether altered, and in five or six years it was scarcely possible to recognize the village which had been so small and so decorous. No one specially objected, however, except Sir James Uttershaw. True, there was a little grumbling, but on the whole Vigo House and The Lodge and all the rest were pleased. The hotel and the villas and the shops meant life and excitement, and where people congregate money is spent ; butter and poultry went up and groceries and draperies went down, to the general satisfaction of the old inhabitants. The vicar got large offertories and was able to put up a new organ, and a grateful patient added two bells to the peal of six ; the butcher enlarged his shop and sent his daughters to school at Brighton ; the landlord of the "Griffin" built new stables and kept horses and carriages for hire, and ran a daily coach to catch the up and meet the down train. The dull, sleepy place woke up, married its maidens to the sons and brothers of patients, grew rich and fat and jingled money in its pockets, and became so much a part of the outer world that it began to subscribe to Mudie's and to run up to London now and then to see the Academy and go to the Lyceum, and even, under the rose, to

read the Society papers and the *Nineteenth Century Review*. It knew all about the aristocracy and the gossip of the stage and what every one's religious tenets were, and the Prince of Wales' movements, and the *on dits* of the clubs and also the latest cut in sleeves and how to do the hair, and the right length for skirts and the last thing in collars and waistcoats. Thanks to Dr. Banister, it was quite a fashionable resort now, and it was agreed that, although Miss Jemmett had done nothing much for her neighbours during her life, she had performed a magnificent act in leaving her modest house and grounds to the distinguished physician. Why, he had actually made Blessingham famous ; every one now knew its name. Was any one ill ?—"Why don't you go to Blessingham?" his friends cried. Did a case baffle the family doctor?—"You must go to Blessingham," said he ; and when people were asked about their summer plans, one out of six replied, "We are going to Blessingham for So-and-so's sake." So renown and fashion settled upon Blessingham, and Dr. Banister was exceedingly busy and had a great account at his banker's, and made himself a fine reputation, and he cured people as if he had been a magician, and every one was delighted.

Every one was pleased except Sir James Uttershaw, but to him the very name of Banister was gall and wormwood. It is not too much to say that he grew to hate his neighbour, and soon after the doctor's arrival he moved his own study and shut up the large dining-hall, because from the windows of those apartments a distant view could be obtained of the chimneys of South Place. To Sir James, all the so-called improvements were vandalisms ; the big hotel and the villas were eyesores ; the shops were vulgar nuisances ; the promenade was an offence ; the band was an impertinence ; even the completion of the peal of bells affronted him, for had he not intended at some future period to present those bells himself ? He would not make use of any of the innovations ; with none of the new shops would he deal ; with none of the visitors would he associate. True, he had contrived to keep the new buildings at arm's length by refusing to let or sell any ground for building purposes. But what is an arm's length to gay, active young people ? They came chattering into the village ; they looked over Sir James' gates ; they sketched his trees ; they even photographed that end of his house which could be seen from the road ; sometimes they dared to petition

to be allowed to see the tapestry and the oriel chamber where the gentle Spenser once slept and the great hall where Charles I. once dined. Thanks to Dr. Banister, Sir James' privacy was molested and his dignity lessened. South Place was small and modern, dating only from the reign of George II., but it was now a place of far more importance than the historic Manor-house, which was Elizabethan and large and handsome, with extensive pleasure-grounds an avenue, and something not unlike a park ; and its master—a mere M.D., a professional man, a young man of respectable parentage, no doubt, but of no illustrious lineage, a man who reckoned his days in the county while the Uttershaws told their centuries—was of far more importance in the public estimation than the lonely denizen of the Manor-house, with his splendid escutcheon, his old title, his connection with the peerage, his long pedigree, and his personal grey hairs and three-score winters. Subscription-lists were taken to South Place first and to the Manor-house second. Cricket matches, flower-shows, school treats, were organized, and the doctor was consulted and not Sir James ; the celebration of Her Majesty's Jubilee was discussed and its method settled before Sir James had realized that the important year had come. Sir James, in fact, was no longer paramount ; he had become of no account ; he was a nonentity ; tacitly, the second fiddle had been forced into his reluctant hands.

It was unfortunate that Lady Uttershaw had died within six months of Dr. Banister's arrival in Blessingham, for Sir James had loved her dearly, and in her bright and sympathetic companionship his petty grievances had been wont to melt away, and when he was deprived of her influence there was nothing to prevent his hugging his annoyances and magnifying them. Before her death, the village had been overrun by strangers and the foundation-stone of the hotel was laid, and when Miss Uttershaw married, a twelvemonth later, the hotel was built and filled, a large draper's establishment had been opened and the promenade was being laid down. Dr. Banister was bidden to the ball before Miss Uttershaw's wedding, but that was the last time that he had set foot in the Manor-house. Sir James only recognized him by the stiffest of bows ; he refused to meet him, and as the doctor knew every one and went everywhere, Sir James sank into utter seclusion. His only son was away with his

regiment ; his only daughter lived in a distant county and only paid flying visits to Blessingham. Society thought that Sir James was an inconsolable widower and presently left him alone. The poor man was disregarded, and he sat at home, brooding over his wrongs, nettled by everything which happened or did not happen, till he became seriously ill, and his daughter and her husband insisted on his having advice. He was extraordinarily thin, he weighed comparatively nothing, his hand shook, his appetite failed, he could not sleep, he could not walk, he was nervous and fanciful and in the lowest spirits. His daughter was extremely alarmed and so was the family doctor, who came over from the market town nine miles off to see him.

"Sir James is beyond me," said this good man, honestly. "I should like him to see Dr. Banister, but as he seems to object to that, you must get him up to town, Lady Grandison, and he must consult Sir Polybius Sampson."

So Lady Grandison dragged her father to London, and he went to see the great physician, and the great physician shook his head and prescribed a generous regimen and fresh air and cheerful society, and said, finally, "You flatter me very much, Sir James, by coming to see me. Since you live at Blessingham, I should have expected you to consult Dr. Robert Banister, one of the most distinguished members of my profession."

"He is an eccentric, unprincipled fool," said Sir James, loudly and angrily. "A physician should live in town, and not turn the country into a sick bed."

And he went away in a rage, and said that all doctors were rogues and idiots.

I don't know if Sir Polybius' laudation of Dr. Banister had anything to do with it, but certainly the London physician's advice and his prescriptions did Sir James no good. Indeed, he became worse. He had seemed before to be thin and light to extremity, but he lost more flesh and more weight ; his appetite was reduced to a minimum ; he dozed fitfully in his arm-chair, but never slept at night at all ; he scarcely opened his lips, and when he did speak he was querulous and irritable. His condition was pitiable, and Lady Grandison, in great alarm and anxiety, telegraphed to her brother and desired him to come home immediately.

Six weeks later, Captain Uttershaw and his bride arrived at

the Manor-house, and as Sir Edward and Lady Grandison were there to meet them, the whole family party was assembled. Captain Uttershaw was greatly shocked at the havoc a few years had wrought in his father's appearance, and Lady Grandison wept and reproached herself for having neglected her parent during the early days of her happy married life. Young Mrs. Uttershaw, aghast at his dismal looks and solitary existence, tried to coax her father-in-law to eat, to be cheerful, to come amongst his children ; but though he liked her attentions, Sir James got no better, and Sir Edward privately told his brother-in-law's wife that it was impossible the old gentleman should live. Sir James' early demise seemed indeed to be highly probable. Still some years short of seventy, he had the appearance of an octogenarian ; his grey hairs had become snow-white ; he walked feebly ; his back was bent ; he seemed incapable of exertion, either mental or bodily ; he sat apart in his study ; he scolded often, but he smiled never.

"If he would only see Dr. Banister, I believe he might be cured," sighed Lady Grandison. "I have the greatest faith in Dr. Banister. Why, people even come from London to consult him ! And if Edward or I were ill, we should go to him without a moment's delay. But papa won't hear of it. Somehow he doesn't like Dr. Banister. I don't know why, for I found him charming during the few months I knew him before my marriage. Poor papa says he has spoilt the place. Certainly he has altered it, but then he alters everything—it is his *raison d'être*; he alters people's constitutions altogether, so they say."

It became a necessity to urge upon Sir James to see Dr. Banister ; but Sir James, when the subject was approached by his son, flew into a violent passion, swore astonishingly, talked more in three minutes than he had done in three months, and refused point-blank to see the man. His violence was so great and his voice so loud that Mrs. Uttershaw peeped in, half afraid that something dreadful might be happening.

"Come in, Lily," said Sir James, checking his anger at once. "Come in, my love. Jem and I have fallen out a little. Come and soothe us !"

"Why, what have you been doing, Jem ?" asked Mrs. Lily reproachfully. "Daddy's hair is all rumpled up, and his white face is quite red."

Then she smoothed the thin white locks and kissed the heated face, and sat down on the arm of Sir James' chair, with her hand upon his shoulder.

"I was only begging my father to send for Dr. Banister, dear," said Jem.

"And I said I'd be hanged first," said Sir James.

"O daddy, I think if you said that, you were a very naughty daddy," said Mrs. Lily, playfully.

"I would," said Sir James, stoutly. "My love, the man is incalculably odious to me."

"I know, daddy. But he might do you good, he is so clever," pleaded the little daughter-in-law. "O daddy, I do so wish you'd see him, to please me, daddy!"

"My love, there is nothing else—*nothing* else I would refuse you," said Sir James. "But I will never ask that man to set his foot over my threshold."

"I don't believe my father would see Banister if he came of his own accord," said Jem, in a melancholy tone.

"Wouldn't you, daddy?" asked Mrs. Uttershaw. "O daddy if a great consulting physician *came*, surely you'd see him?"

"Yes, my love," said Sir James. "If a great consulting physician came, I would. But this man is a scandalous quack. How could he come? I haven't spoken to the miserable fellow for four years at least."

"He might come on business, daddy."

"Nonsense, my love! I have no business with that man."

"Still, if he *did* come, you'd see him, I suppose? To please me, you'd see him if he were actually in the house, daddy?"

"If the man came into my house, I'd see him, of course," said Sir James. "But he won't come—he knows better, my love, he knows better."

Whereupon, Mrs. Lily smiled a very sweet and significant smile, and she kissed her father-in-law again and said it was a shame of Jem to have teased him so, and offered to read the *Times* to him if he liked. But the next morning, immediately after breakfast, she put on her hat and gloves and tripped away to South Place. It was a quarter to ten when she reached the doctor's front door, and when the servant answered her summons, she gave him her card and said, "Ask Dr. Banister if he will be so very kind as to spare me five minutes before he sees his

patients. 'I have not come to see him professionally, but on very particular business.'

The waiting-room was already full of patients from the hotel and the villas, so the servant showed the lady into the consulting-room and went to fetch his master, who was lounging away his last moments of leisure in his little breakfast-room over the *Saturday Review*.

"Who on earth is Mrs. Uttershaw, and what does she want with me?" said he to himself, surveying the card. "I didn't know there was a Mrs. Uttershaw. And at this hour, too! However——"

He felt no particular cordiality towards the Uttershaws, but he could not refuse to see a lady, so he straightened himself and went off with a sigh.

"A wretched woman whose spoilt children want to trespass on my grounds," he thought. "I remember young Uttershaw at his sister's wedding, and I suppose this tiresome person is his wife. However, I shall be very short with her and get rid of her in two minutes."

Then he opened the door and the wretched woman rose to meet him. The doctor was barely forty, and, though he had never married, he was extremely susceptible to the charms of the other sex, and he felt quite startled at the vision of grace and beauty and youth which stood before him; metaphorically, he fell down at Mrs. Lily's feet instantly.

"Dr. Banister, I ought to apologize for coming to see you at this hour," said the lady, without circumlocution. "I am Sir James Uttershaw's daughter-in-law, and, knowing the proverbial kindness of your profession, I have come to ask you to do me—to do my husband and his sister and all of us—a great favour."

"If I can do anything for you, great or small, I am at your service, Mrs. Uttershaw," said Dr. Banister. "Pray sit down, I am not in the least busy."

"You are very kind," said Mrs. Uttershaw. "But I am sure you are busy and I won't keep you long. Do you know that my father-in-law is very ill?"

"I had heard that he was ailing," said the doctor.

"He is very ill," repeated Mrs. Uttershaw, with emphasis. "He has consulted Sir Polybius Sampson without any good result, and we all want him to consult you. But he cannot leave

the house, and he says nothing shall induce him to ask you to come to him. However, yesterday I extracted a promise from him that if you came, he would see you. Now, Dr. Banister, I know I am asking a very unusual thing, but can you, and will you, help me? Will you come and see my father-in-law this afternoon?"

It is probable that if Mrs. Lily had asked him to see all the monkeys at the Zoo he would have consented; he was fascinated by this pretty creature's simplicity and candour, and by her delicate beauty and her dainty costume; he quite forgot that she was a tiresome person, and he entered into all her plans with zest and understanding, and finally walked with her to the gate which led from his own grounds into Sir James' fields, quite regardless of the fact that the clock had struck ten twenty minutes ago, that his room was crammed with patients, and that he prided himself upon his punctuality. Then he shook her hand warmly and actually stood at the little wicket looking after her as she went along the narrow path, her pretty pink skirts brushing against the tall daisies and the long grass, and the breeze fluttering the lace edge of her parasol and the knot of ribbons in her hat, and he envied the grass and the daisies and the breeze, and thought that Captain Uttershaw was a lucky dog, and wondered if Mrs. Uttershaw had an unmarried sister, and then sighed and called himself a fool and told himself that though twenty was the most charming age in woman, no doubt women of twenty looked upon men of forty as old fogies. Notwithstanding which sad reflections, as soon as he had dismissed his last patient, he rummaged through a file of the *Times*, till he came upon the announcement of Captain Uttershaw's marriage to Lily, younger daughter of General Sir Charles Courtenay, K.C.S.I., and on looking for Sir Charles' history in Debrett's "Peerage, Baronetage and Knighthage," he discovered that Lily's elder sister was named Elinor and that up to a very recent date she had been a spinster. With which information he felt very much comforted, and at four o'clock that afternoon he presented himself at the Manor-house, and was shown into the drawing-room where Lady Grandison and Mrs. Uttershaw were sitting.

"Dr. Banister, I think this is too good of you," said the former. "I tried to dissuade my sister-in-law from calling on you, for I thought you would be offended and say it was against

professional etiquette, but she declared doctors were always kind, and I see she was right. Now, Lily, this is your affair and you must carry it through and take Dr. Banister to the study. Dr. Banister, I fear you may find my father very crotchety," she added, after a long pause, for she did not like to say what would have been the strict truth, "very cross and very surly."

"I shall be very happy to do anything I can," said the doctor. "But don't expect too much, Lady Grandison."

Then Mrs. Uttershaw conducted the visitor to the study, and as she preceded him, the doctor thought that, if possible, she was prettier and more attractive in her afternoon dress, all silk and shining beads, than she had been in the morning in her print gown and rustic hat, and he wondered if Elinor were like her.

Mrs. Uttershaw opened her father-in-law's door gently and looked in.

"Dear daddy, here is Dr. Banister come to see you," she said. "Come in, Dr. Banister, my father-in-law will be pleased to see you."

Then she stood aside, and when the doctor had passed within, she softly closed the door after him and went away.

Sir James was sitting in a large arm-chair near the fire-place, and a small fire was burning, because—though it was June and pleasant weather—Sir James' ill-health made him chilly; he held a large knobbed stick between his knees, and, as Dr. Banister advanced, he looked fiercely at him over his shoulder, not rising to greet him or speaking a word of welcome, but scowling at him beneath his thick eyebrows.

"Sir James, I heard you were ill and I have come, as a neighbour, to offer my services," said Dr. Banister, without preface, thinking that plain-dealing would be the wisest course to take with this ungracious old gentleman. "I know a good deal about illness, as you are aware, and if, as a neighbour, I may be allowed to try to restore you to health, I shall be sincerely glad."

"Sir, you possibly mean well, but let me tell you that I consider your presence here an impertinence," said Sir James, very angry. "I believe, sir, I am right in saying I did not send for you."

"No, Sir James, you did not send for me. However, hearing you were ill, I have come, and I hope you will allow me to remain a few minutes," said Dr. Banister.

"You can remain, sir, as many minutes as you may consider it gentlemanly to remain after you have been distinctly told by the master of this house that your visit is unwelcome and intrusive," said Sir James, grimly. "It is impossible for me, as a gentleman, absolutely to turn you out of my doors."

Then Sir James turned his back upon the doctor, who was still standing, and he thumped the floor violently with his stick as he shifted his position in his arm-chair. It almost seemed as if Dr. Banister must depart. But he remembered Mrs. Uttershaw and he thought of the maiden Elinor and he tried another tack.

"I heard that you had consulted Sir Polybius Sampson," he observed.

"Did that rogue Sampson send you here?" demanded Sir James, without looking round.

"No, Sir James. But in a small place like Blessingham one often hears of one's neighbour's affairs."

"Small place!" snarled Sir James. "How have you the face to call this monstrous, overgrown, unhealthy, filthy, miserable, disgusting, ruined place *small*? I suppose you are aware that you have defiled it till an old inhabitant, like me, can hardly recognize it? Why, I found a wasp's nest, sir, on the very site of your hideous, repulsive, over-crowded hotel, when I was thirteen!"

"That is most interesting," remarked the doctor. "Do you know Hampstead and St. John's Wood? Well, I made hay and gathered dog-roses on the site of Fitz-John's Avenue when I was thirteen! *Tempora mutantur.*"

Sir James snorted loudly, and in a manner which, in any one but a sick man, might have been considered rude and offensive.

"I don't care a hang what you did when you were thirteen, sir, or any other man either," he said, positively.

"True. The question is, what you did when you were thirteen. Did you enjoy fairly robust health, Sir James?"

"I did, sir, I was as strong a boy as you could wish to see."

"And was your early manhood tolerably vigorous, Sir James?"

"Tolerably, sir! I rowed in the 'Varsity eight, sir, and I hunted five times a week, and didn't turn a hair!"

"Well done! I'm afraid, however, you over-did it, or carried it on too late in life. You don't look like riding across country or rowing for a cup now."

"Riding! Rowing!" ejaculated Sir James. "Confound it, sir, I'm very ill! I'm as near as possible a dead man! Riding! Why, I haven't put my leg across a horse for three years! I'm a doomed man, sir, and nobody can help me. I don't know what's the matter with me—that fool Sampson told me I had no organic disease, but hang it, sir, when a man's dying by inches, what the devil does it matter whether his disease is organic or not? I tell you I'm on the verge of the grave. Death has me in his grip, and in a very few months there'll be one less old sinner in this wicked world."

Then the poor old invalid shed a few foolish tears out of his over-wrought soul. But the doctor, who was about as well versed in the ways of the sick as any man in the world, took no notice of them, though he was glad to see them because they helped him to diagnose the case, and also because they showed him that for the moment the hard old heart was softer. So he sat down, uninvited, and said, soothingly, "Not if the faculty can prevent it, Sir James. Come, if you don't mind, I should like to ask you two or three test questions, and then you can tell me anything else about yourself that occurs to you."

The thin end of the wedge was in, and with tact and precision Dr. Banister hammered at it till he obtained all the information he wanted. Naturally, Sir James was somewhat stiff at first, but after a time his *hauteur* yielded to the delight of talking about himself—a delight so dear to the heart of a chronic invalid. For months Sir James had not spoken to any one about himself, and now that he found himself talking to a patient and sympathetic listener, he could not resist the temptation, or deny himself the pleasure of describing his symptoms and dilating upon his sensations. Moreover, in the course of the interview, he was able to give the doctor a great many covert hits, and to say a great many nasty things which applied to him, and this was a relief. It is always so satisfactory to tell the plausible wicked that one sees through him—that, though he may flourish like a green bay-tree, one can distinctly see the canker at his heart.

The doctor listened attentively, and drew the patient out with great skill. Never was a cleverer doctor than Robert Banister! His genius for eliciting the exact state of people's minds and the causes which had conducted to that state, had made him long ago the king of mental pathologists. The conversation was

prolonged, but at last Dr. Banister was able to read his neighbour's heart like a book, and he saw clearly that he himself was the cause of Sir James' illness. He was the unconscious rival whose presence had occasioned Sir James' jealousy and mortification ; he had unwittingly nourished Sir James' morbid animosity ; his popularity had robbed Sir James of that ease of mind which promotes health. He saw the whole thing as clearly as he saw the sun in the heavens, and his sagacious intellect instantly showed him the cure. There was but one. Drugs, he was aware, were of no avail in this case ; nor were bed and diet, and the cold pack ; nor were travel and agreeable society and amusement ; nor were the waters of Bath, or Buxton, or Homburg ; nor was galvanism, nor the Turkish bath, nor even massage. There was but one mode of treatment for this case, and the doctor sighed involuntarily, for he was but human.

"There is nothing more to say," said Sir James, at last. "I have made a clean breast of it, sir, and I foresee that you cannot help me."

"I can certainly help you, Sir James," said Dr. Banister, cheerfully. "True," he added, seriously, "yours is a somewhat unique case ; nevertheless, I believe I can put you to rights, if you will agree to follow my directions implicitly. I am not going to diet you or dose you ; I am only going to order you to act. To begin with, you must get up this minute and fall upon me with your stick and thrash me well."

For a moment Sir James looked at his interlocutor in speechless surprise. Then he laughed sardonically.

"You are a fool, sir," he said. And after he had made this direct thrust he felt better—almost as if he could enjoy his dinner.

"You must thrash me well," repeated the doctor, quietly. "After that I shall leave you for six weeks, during which period I shall require you to write me a letter every day, in which you must vilify and abuse me as if I had done you an enormous injury and you had a bitter grudge against me. I shall expect you to employ all your powers of vituperation against me. I shall not be contented if you don't use the strongest language. I shall not be satisfied if you don't empty the vials of your wrath upon my head. Sometimes I shall answer the letters and attempt to exculpate myself, but I shall expect you to annihilate

my arguments and to rebut my defence. You must bring all your powers of sarcasm and invective to bear upon me; you must stoutly maintain that I have outraged you; you must demonstrate that I am the greatest villain unhung. At the expiration of the six weeks I shall call again and request you to thrash me soundly once more. After that I trust you will find yourself another man."

"You are a fool, sir, and your cure is the cure of a quack!" said Sir James, vehemently.

"Nevertheless, Sir James, it *is* my cure, and I must beg you to carry it out," said Dr. Banister. "With your permission, I will take a book for a few minutes while you consider the subject. But pray recollect that you are *very* ill—very ill, indeed—and that the remedy I have pointed out is the sole remedy which will be useful in your case."

Then Dr. Banister selected a volume from the book-shelves and took it to the window, standing with his back to his patient, apparently absorbed in reading.

Left to himself, Sir James reviewed the situation and said over and over again in his mind that the man was a fool, and that it was preposterous and unseemly to expect any one to carry out a treatment which involved the use of the stick. Nevertheless, his soul yearned to thrash the fellow; it had been yearning to thrash him for years, and now that he was positively invited—nay, absolutely commanded—to satisfy his inclinations, his fingers Itched to do it. His heart beat quicker at the thought; the blood seemed to course through his veins in a livelier manner and he already felt stronger. He glanced at the figure in the window. Dr. Banister was tall and well proportioned; he was, besides, scarcely more than a young man. But Sir James felt that he was equal to the occasion, and what joy it would be to punish his enemy well! Even if he struggled, Sir James, who had been weak and nerveless for many months, felt that he could grapple with him successfully, and it would be untold delight to pay him off for all old scores and to cut him up without mercy. Sir James was not a cruel man; he had never whipped his children, he had been a tender husband, he was kind to animals. But this was his foe, and he felt that he could beat him with pleasure, and if he could make him wince and writhe and cry out, it would be glorious—glorious!

Then the doctor closed his book and came back to Sir James' side.

"Well, Sir James, have you made up your mind to it?" he said, pleasantly.

"It would be a most improper proceeding, sir," said Sir James, frowning.

"But since it is your only means of regaining health and vigour, I quite hope you will be persuaded to resort to it," said Dr. Banister. "You want exercise—you want stimulus—you want tone. Pray begin."

The doctor gravely removed his coat and waistcoat. He stood prepared. Sir James' fingers tingled to be at him, but the conventionalities of society are very strong.

"It is utter nonsense," he said, testily. "You forget, apparently, that I am a gentleman."

"Not at all," returned Dr. Banister. "But you are a sick gentleman, and I venture to consider you my patient. Come, Sir James, I am not accustomed to have the validity of my prescriptions disputed, and I must beg you to lay about with that stick of yours without more ado. But let me tell you that the efficacy of the medicine lies in the quantity and the quality of the blows given. Beat me as hard as you can and don't stop till you are tired. It will do you no good unless you inflict a sound thrashing. Now—I am ready."

"You fool!" cried Sir James.

But, strange to relate, he raised his arm and began to thrash the doctor. Afterwards he wondered how he had brought himself to do it, but something in the commanding aspect of Dr. Banister, in the resolution of his eye and the imperativeness of his voice, compelled his obedience, and no doubt his own ardent longing to undo the man who had undone him assisted. At all events, he thrashed the poor doctor soundly and with every blow his zest and vigour increased. Dr. Banister bore this tremendous castigation like a man; certainly, he had never been so belaboured in his life, and as the thundering blows rained upon him he suffered acutely and felt a perfect tempest of sympathy for inky little schoolboys and costermongers' Neddies and drunken blackguards' wives; but he thought of Mrs. Uttershaw and the unmarried Elinor, and—though his breath came quick and fast and the unwonted perspiration stood upon his brow—he never

flinched or begged for mercy or attempted to run away or seize the stick in his strong hands.

At last, however, Sir James was tired. His arms ached ; his brain reeled with the intensity of his satisfaction ; moreover, there were blood-stains on the doctor's white shirt. It had been a sanguinary affair, and Sir James felt fatigued, but infinitely better. He sank into his chair.

"Don't say you didn't ask for it, sir," he said, triumphantly, wiping his brow.

The doctor did not speak ; he was putting on his coat and his face was very white. He was, indeed, quite faint, and when he turned round to address his patient, he found that his consciousness was going also. So he lay down on the sofa and closed his eyes, and for a moment the world went away from him and he knew nothing. But he was robust, and he recovered quickly and looked up. Sir James was standing beside him, looking anxiously down upon his victim.

"Was it too much for you, sir ? I said it was an indecent proceeding," said he, in a quiet gentle tone.

"I think you will quite regain your strength," said Dr. Banister, smiling. "I believe my treatment will ultimately cure you. Remember to write to me daily, and—though I have never done you any harm in my life—be sure you write to me as if I had robbed you of your dearest treasure and insulted you grossly. Otherwise, do what you like ; eat as much as you can, converse with your family, play cards, enjoy music, read novels, go out walking or driving the moment you feel inclined. I shall see you again in six weeks, and probably you will demolish me entirely with your stout stick and your strong right arm. Good-bye."

"Won't you have a glass of wine ?" said Sir James.

Dr. Banister declined this delicate attention, and Sir James actually shook hands with the fellow, and also walked across the room and opened the door for him. Then he went back to his seat, and although as a gentleman he was sorry and ashamed that he had thrashed another gentleman in his own house, he could not forbear chuckling over the pleasing fact that he had chastised an enemy and nearly annihilated him.

"Upon my soul, I thought I'd done for him," the old gentleman said to himself many times.

But since he hadn't quite done for him, he was glad that, as the saying goes, he had thrashed him within an inch of his life. Somehow, however, Sir James did not see fit to tell his children exactly what treatment the doctor had prescribed.

"We had a long talk," said he, vaguely. "The man is an idiot, as I have always maintained, and I only saw him to please Lily ; he wishes me to write him an account of my feelings every day for six weeks."

"And did he order you no medicine, daddy?" asked Mrs. Uttershaw.

"Well, my love, he then and there made me go through a very curious kind of gymnastics—ha—ha!" said Sir James, with grim humour. "It's to be repeated in six weeks, and then he declares I shall be convalescent. It's a funny recipe, my love, isn't it?"

Then Sir James laughed again, and as nobody had heard him laugh for two or three years, they all felt sure that he was better ; also he ate his dinner with quite an appetite, and told Jem and Sir Edward stories of his feats at Oxford, and after dinner he played cribbage with Mrs. Lily and beat her.

"That's like Dr. Banister's gymnastics, my love," he remarked.

This was enigmatical and nobody understood it, but certainly Sir James was better and they were all very thankful, and the next day Mrs. Uttershaw wrote the sweetest little note to Dr. Banister, expressing the gratitude of the whole family and their admiration of the doctor's skill, which had made Sir James a different man already.

This note was delivered to the poor doctor as he lay in bed, ill and feverish, too stiff to sit up and in too much pain to see his disappointed patients, who were all sent away and who returned to the hotel wretched and terribly afraid that the doctor was going to die suddenly and leave them in the lurch. The doctor, however, being, as I have said before, of a robust constitution, and being besides in the prime of life, being cheered also by Mrs. Uttershaw's pretty grateful note, got well, and no one but his confidential servant knew of his wounds and bruises, and even he did not know how they had been acquired, being merely told by his master that they were the result of a tough interview with a patient whose mind was slightly unhinged. In a couple of days the patients were re-admitted to the presence-

chamber, and Dr. Banister was once more able to shrug his shoulders and lean back in his chair, without confessing by all his attitudes and his every movement that he had recently been severely knocked about. Then he met Lady Grandison and Mrs. Uttershaw out of doors and received their thanks verbally, and was able to persuade them to come and partake of strawberries and cream in his garden, though he refused their cordial invitations to the Manor-house, saying that he could not come thither till six weeks had expired. However, an *entente cordiale* was established between the two houses which had been so long at enmity, and the doctor pursued his new acquaintance with ardour, and thought a great deal of the unknown Elinor.

Meantime, Sir James' letters flowed to South Place daily. The invalid spent nearly the whole of every morning writing them, and came to luncheon quite hungry with the exertion. As for the letters they were on foolscap, and were the longest epistolary compilations that can be imagined. Sir James, who was no fool, stated his grievances clearly and at great length, describing Blessingham as it had once been, contrasting its former with its present condition, and abusing the doctor for having introduced innovations, for making the village an unfit habitation for Christians, for contaminating it with shops and hotels and crowds of sick Londoners, for, in fact, rendering himself a public nuisance. Sir James was so engrossed with his daily work that he hardly realized to whom his letters were addressed, and he vituperated his correspondent without stint and did not attempt to conceal his own transparent egoism. Every second or third day Dr. Banister sent a succinct reply to the black and fearful charges brought against him, and after a time the tone of Sir James' letters became greatly modified. In the first week, he called Dr. Banister a conceited upstart, a designing rogue, a thorough-paced humbug and an insane fool, without apology; in the second week, he compared him to several sad, bad historical characters, but wound up by saying he doubted not his opponent had meant well, though his pigheaded blindness naturally prevented him seeing things in their right light; in the third, he contented himself with vaguely declaring that people who wished to be regarded as Christian gentlemen should not do obnoxious things; in the fourth, he was satisfied to generalize upon the extreme unpleasantness of the whole medical profession; in the

fifth, he excepted Dr. Banister, and paid him some compliments, informing him that he had gained flesh and his family was of opinion that in point of appetite and cheerfulness he was like his old self ; in the sixth, he wrote amicably and thankfully, saying that a burden seemed to have fallen off him and that it appeared to him now as if his old grievances had been more or less imaginary ; and finally, on the last day, he penned quite an affectionate letter to his dear Dr. Banister, expressing his great indebtedness to the physician for having cured him of a painful depression of spirits and a physical inability to eat, sleep, or be amused ; not being a doctor, he added, it was impossible for him to conceive how the cure had been effected without drugs or applications of any kind, but he supposed that Dr. Banister had exercised some occult influence over him, for certainly he had begun to feel better from the moment Dr. Banister entered his study ; his gratitude accordingly was unmeasured—how to express it—how to testify it—he did not know, but he hoped that he and the doctor should be good friends for the future, and in this hope, with very kind regards, in which all his family joined, he remained most sincerely Dr. Banister's, James Uttershaw.

Dr. Banister perused this effusion, smiling ; then he took up his hat and sallied forth to the Manor-house, with a light heart. When he was shown into Sir James' presence, the old gentleman sprang up to meet him and came forward, his hand outstretched, a beaming smile upon his countenance. He was quite another creature ; he was almost a young man again.

"Dr. Banister, I don't know how to thank you," he cried.

"You have rewarded me by getting well," said the doctor. "But you haven't fulfilled the whole treatment, Sir James ; you forget that you are going to give me another sound thrashing to-day."

"That I will never do, so don't ask it," said Sir James, putting his hands behind his back : "I have been ashamed of myself ever since I did it. Nevertheless, I am bound to confess I began to feel better from that moment."

"In my theory of therapeutics, Sir James," said the doctor, "hypertrophied cerebration should be satiated rather than starved ; morbid brain-action is quicker restored to its normal conditions by the exhaustion consequent upon satiety than by the irritation produced by perpetual arrestment. Hence my treatment."

Sir James was quite dumb-founded by this flow of long words.

"You are very clever," he said.

Dr. Banister bowed.

"Shall we go through it again?" he asked.

"Never! I would sooner die," said Sir James, fervently.
"My dear Dr. Banister, can you ever forgive me?"

"My dear Sir James, didn't I make you do it?"

"Yes—but I oughtn't to have acceded. I was a brute and a cad—I was a blackguard—an infernal blackguard—and you don't know how I have blushed—yes, at sixty-six *blushed*—to think of it. I made you faint, Dr. Banister—I drew your blood. I must have hurt you badly."

"Well, your arm was stronger than I expected," said the doctor, laughing. "But since you have recovered your health, I am satisfied, and if we are to be neighbourly neighbours henceforth——"

"Neighbours!" interrupted Sir James. "From henceforth, Dr. Banister, let us be the best of friends! If you don't come and dine with me to-night, I shall quarrel with you on quite a different score."

So Dr. Banister came to dinner, with a flower in his coat because he was going to meet Mrs. Lily, and when he entered the drawing-room there sat Lady Grandison and Mrs. Uttershaw and a lovely young lady, who seemed to be Mrs. Uttershaw's double, only, if possible, to be sweeter and daintier and prettier even than she.

"Dr. Banister, let me introduce you to my sister," said Mrs. Uttershaw.

So the doctor's dream was fulfilled, for here was the maiden Elinor, and she was as perfect as his wild and lover-like imagination had supposed her to be. But we will not pry further into his proceedings. It is sufficient to say, that not only has he become Sir James' close friend, but that he is no longer a bachelor, and that he calls Mrs. Uttershaw "Lily," and signs himself, when he writes to her,—*Your very affec. brother.*

FAYR MADOC.

Geraghty's Garden.

By ELLA MACMAHON,
Author of "HEATHCOTE," etc., etc.

EVERY man, woman and child in the town of Aughrim knew Geraghty's garden; and every man, woman and child knew Geraghty himself equally well. For Geraghty was the sexton of the parish church (that is the Protestant church) of Aughrim, and Geraghty kept a dairy, and Geraghty owned a market garden. And this market garden, wherein grew potatoes and cabbages innumerable, with vegetables of higher degree in precisely inverse ratio, according to the unwritten law which regulates market gardens in Ireland, this garden was Geraghty's most cherished possession, for Geraghty held it in the supremely gratifying consciousness that by so doing he kept it out of the hands of his dearest foe, one Christopher Clinch, farmer, churchwarden, select vestryman of the parish of Aughrim, who longed with an exceeding great longing to annex unto the ninety acres of his own good grazing land the little half-acre which formed Geraghty's garden. More than once had Christopher Clinch, by fair means and by foul, tried to wrest from Geraghty his coveted garden; but never Naboth held his vineyard closer than did Geraghty his garden; never would Geraghty hear the voice of the charmer, charm Christopher Clinch ever so wisely. No; the garden was Geraghty's garden, and Geraghty's garden it had for five-and-thirty years remained. Therefore because of this garden, for all those five-and-thirty years had Cornelius Geraghty and Christopher Clinch preserved towards each other an attitude, which has been in the history of nations, not inaptly described, as "an armed neutrality."

Thus, as our novelists invariably declare, "time rolled on."

The inhabitants of Aughrim, not unlike the inhabitants of other places too, derived a considerable amount of gratification from closely following the tacit warfare between two of their greatest men. For, if Christopher Clinch, farmer, churchwarden, select vestryman—Christopher Clinch, who lived in the big slated

house at Rath, who was popularly believed to have "stacks o' money" in the National Bank—was (with the exception of the Clerk of the Crown) the greatest man in Aughrim, there was a decided concensus of opinion in favour of Geraghty running him very close for the position. Geraghty was sexton, Geraghty was the rector's right hand man, Geraghty was on intimate terms with such personages as the Bishop of the diocese and the High Sheriff of the county, while as to the Clerk of the Crown, and the district inspector of the "Royal Irish Constabulary," Geraghty hob-nobbed with such small fry with the ease and *aplomb* only to be attained by one who has spent long years in the performance of exalted and responsible duties. The halo of a refined position indeed shed around Geraghty an ennobling effulgence.

Nevertheless Geraghty had his enemies. And the enemies of greatness are, so the wise among mankind assure us, more in number than its friends. Thus, because Geraghty had a red nose, there were not found wanting those who could say, that Geraghty's red nose and Mullally's public house (the little one round the furthest corner from the church, with the inscription over the entrance door—"P. Mullally, licensed for the sale of tobacco and spirits, to be consumed on the premises")—there were not found wanting evil tongues to say that Mullally's public house and Geraghty's red nose stood to one another in the close relationship of cause and effect.

And evil tongues could say this, despite even the testimony of no less a person than Geraghty's own mother. Now Geraghty's own mother laid the existence of Geraghty's red nose wholly and solely on Geraghty's own liver.

"For," said Geraghty's own mother, with a sadly proud inclination of her venerable head, "that child Cornaylius (Geraghty was fifty-nine) never from the day of his birth had any liver to spake of. Ah! never. It was just a make-shift, Cornaylius's liver, and nothin' more. If any other man was left like Cornaylius with a make-shift for a liver, it's not a red nose he'd have, it's no nose at all, ne'er a nose at all. When I look at Cornaylius's nose, and think of his liver, I'm struck dumb at wondering how he just has a nose at all. But Cornaylius is that sort of man, that what'd daunt five hundred keeps him higher and better than ever."

Thus spoke Geraghty's mother on the subject of Geraghty's nose. And surely if Geraghty's mother were not an authority on that point, to whom would it be possible to apply for more reliable information?

Some months ere this, however, Geraghty's mother had passed into that "Silent Land," as the poet has called it, and in which, if the poet's appellation be indeed the true one, the mother of Geraghty must find herself (like Othello) with "her occupation gone," for the mother of Geraghty was a mighty talker. Departed this life, at all events, had Geraghty's mother, at an advanced age, estimated indeed at various figures, from ninety-five to one hundred and three, and Geraghty was left alone, for wife and child Geraghty had none. His departed mother had in truth looked with an eye of little favour upon such appendages of human life.

"Cornaylius," she had said, "has no call to be making a fool of himself. Cornaylius isn't the boy for such things. A wife and childe'r'd just wear him to skin and bone. Cornaylius has his bizness to attind to, and never wants one next or nigh him, only his poor ould mother. And, what's more, there isn't a girl in Ireland could manage Cornaylius but meself."

Thus with grace and delicacy did "Cornaylius's" mother warn off all trespassers. But, lack-a-day, the mother of Geraghty had been called upon to pay the debt of all flesh, and owing that debt to a creditor who has never yet been known to wait the pleasure or convenience of any human debtor, the mother of Geraghty had, so to speak, to pay up promptly, and to leave Geraghty alone and defenceless in a world of wicked women.

Geraghty's mother died and was buried. And then, ay, ere the grass was green on her grave, Geraghty fulfilled the worst foreboding of his mother's prophetic soul, for—Geraghty fell in love. Geraghty, aged fifty-nine—Geraghty, parish sexton—Geraghty, the proprietor of the Aughrim-Select-Fresh-Milk-Dairy—Geraghty, the owner of the Aughrim-Market-Garden—Geraghty loved! And she whom Geraghty loved was none other than the daughter of Geraghty's life-long enemy, Christopher Clinch. Yes, like those immortal lovers, who lived and loved and lost, in sweet Verona, long, long ago, Geraghty loved his enemy's daughter, and his enemy's daughter loved him—at least, so she told him.

She whom Geraghty loved was only some thirty odd years his junior. He had assisted, in his official capacity, at her christening ; he had, for more than seventeen years, on each succeeding Sunday morning opened for her the door of her father's pew (the third row back from the top, left hand side, facing the pulpit), he had sat in his seat beneath the pulpit and gazed at her with contemplative mien, all through all the sermons of all those Sundays ; gazed at her to declare, later on, that :—

" She was something to look at. Something like a girl. None o' yer little dwarfs. None o' yer scraggy scare-crows. But, tall as the door and made in proportion, there was a figure of a girl. Fit to frighten the Queen, so she was. Aisy, illigant, wid a style fit for the highest in the land. Too good to be that ould naygur's daughter, but just the girl to be Mrs. Geraghty."

Thus was the fall of Geraghty.

But Geraghty was a great man, and Geraghty wooed not in vain. Despite his red nose, despite his lowly stature (" For I am not," Geraghty would say, " what ye'd call a *tall* man"), despite the trifling difference in their respective ages, the lady of his love smiled upon him. She was a young lady of buxom proportions, albeit she was still in the twenties ; her eyes were black and sparkling, her cheeks were round and brightly tinted, her manners were exceedingly vivacious. And she loved Geraghty.

When his mother had been six months dead, and on the day after her tombstone (a monument of gigantic proportions and surpassing melancholy, the awe and cynosure of every eye in the parish), was erected and complete, Geraghty put his fate to the touch. He spoke, and he spoke persuasively, he spoke ardently, he spoke with passion and fervent admiration.

" I am," he said in conclusion, " a man o' me word. I am thirty years in the Church, I live rint free, the house wants paper and paint it's true, but I'll see to that if ye'll only say the word. I'm not a young fella ; faith, I'd rather see a girl dead and buried, *dead and buried* fifty times over, than see a girl marry a young fella. For what's young fellas ? Impudent brats, good-for-nothing blaggards, stuck-up ignoramuses, stiff-necked sinners, Godless blasphemers—that's what young fellas are. What do the like o' them know of trating a wife? *Nothing*. Beat her, starve her, drink all before them (tho' that same isn't much, for where'd they get a penny o' money ?), that's the fate of a young fella's wife.

But look at me, look at a man o' my time o' life. Thirty years in the Church, respected and beloved ; a man o' sinse ; a man o' money ; a man o' position ; able to make a *lady* of his wife. Able to give her her own dairy, her own house (kitchen, parlour, two bedrooms, scullery, pantry, fowl-yard, green-house, and all illigantly furnished). Able to give her a handsome jaunting car, with the finest little jennet in the land to draw it. Able to give her the best pitata garden in the town. *I'm* the man for a decent girl. Sober, honest, quiet, gentle—gentle as a lamb—no temper, no drink, all agreeable to everything she'd say or do ; the pleasantest creature in life to live with. I don't want to flatter myself, for I hate a man that ud blow himself off, but just, me dear, before ye refuse me, just take a look at me mother's tombstone. *That'll* show you the sort o' man that wants to marry you. Is there a man in the land that could equal that tombstone, that could pay that respect to his mother but meself? Look at it ; cost twenty pound, oh, not a word o' lie. I'll show ye the bill, and then look at me. And I'd do the same again for every one belongin' to me, I would so. There's no end, *no end* to me generosity if I'm fond of a person. Tell me where ye'd see the like o' that tombstone, and if ye can find its equal ye may call me a haythen."

Enough ; she was his, his for all time, subject only to the approval and permission of her paternal relative. This last clause was the one bitter drop in Geraghty's cup of bliss. For was not that paternal relative Geraghty's life-long foe, and must he not abase himself before his enemy to beg the hand of her whom he loved ? But Geraghty was a great man, and Geraghty feared no foe.

Up to Rath went Geraghty, armed with the embassies of peace. Into the presence of his enemy he went with undaunted front. Before that enemy he laid his heart bare.

The enemy listened with exceeding quietness ; and when Geraghty had said it all (and a good hour or more it took to say it), Christopher Clinch laid down his terms. Geraghty might have his, Clinch's, daughter if in return he, Clinch, might have his, Geraghty's, garden. That was the paternal condition, and from that, nor peace, nor war, nor imprecation, nor persuasion would move Christopher Clinch.

"The girl or the garden," quoth Christopher Clinch, "take

her or leave her, but you can't have both ; and you'll get her no other way."

And then Geraghty arose in his wrath, and swore loud and long, deep and strong, in words not to be repeated, out of respect to Geraghty's ecclesiastical office and Geraghty's wounded heart, that neither would he give up the garden nor the girl. Both did he love, both would he have. Then, growing cooler, he offered to settle the garden, for ever and ever, in every proper legal phrase and by every proper legal method, on Clinch's daughter, the day that daughter should become his, Geraghty's, wife. As well might he offer to settle the Crown of England on that daughter's black hair. Clinch would have the girl or the garden ; and Geraghty went home cursing and swearing and gnashing his teeth, while his lady-love remained immured at Rath, weeping and wailing and refusing to be comforted.

The war raged. Geraghty's garden was Geraghty's garden still, and Clinch's daughter was Clinch's daughter still. Sunday after Sunday Geraghty, with nose redder than ever, and his lady-love, with eyelids which matched the tint of Geraghty's nasal organ most wondrously well, gazed at one another across a vista of pews all through the sermon. But one day there went forth at Rath a paternal edict, which forbade Geraghty's lady-love to go to church any more.

It was a mean revenge—it was a spiteful thought ; it goaded Geraghty to madness.

* * * * *

There went out through the streets of Aughrim the report that Geraghty lay sick.

He was not in the dairy, he was not in the garden, he was not in the church ; he lay in his own bed, sick ; ere long rumour cried aloud, sick unto death.

The doctor shook his head; the rector shook *his* head ; Judy Grogan, the parish nurse, the gentle angel, who ministered to the sick poor of Aughrim, shook *her* head. Geraghty was a dying man. Asked the cause, the doctor spoke of Russian influenza, and hinted at a chill. Judy Grogan snapped her fingers (metaphorically speaking, of course) in the man of medicine's face and said :

"Rooshian Grandmothers ! *she* knew what ail'd ded him.

Bad treatment and a broken heart that's what was killing him."

And it looked as if Judy Grogan were right, and the man of science wrong.

For days, Geraghty lay silent, speaking to none, caring for none, eating nothing, drinking nothing. Like Hezekiah of old, he turned his face to the wall, and seemed to wait for death. Doctor and clergyman visited him daily ; the former said he grew weaker, the latter said—nothing at all. On the ninth day, Geraghty opened his eyes on the doctor, and asked to speak with him alone. At the end of ten minutes the doctor came forth from Geraghty's room and immediately sent for the rector. The rector remained alone with Geraghty for nearly an hour. They spoke together long and low, so low that Judy Grogan with her ear to the keyhole could not catch a single word. And then the rector, like the doctor, came forth from Geraghty's room, and the rector's long lean figure, in its long lean black coat, was seen on the road to Rath. Excitement could no further go in Aughrim than when the rector returned from Rath with Christopher Clinch.

Up to Geraghty's bedside the rector brought Geraghty's life-long foe. There lay Geraghty prone and silent. Very changed was Geraghty, so changed that Christopher Clinch could scarce recognize his ancient foe. All the colour had fled from Geraghty's nose, all the light from Geraghty's eyes ; his cheeks were sunken and livid, his hands were yellow and emaciated. If ever mortal man bore upon his body the sad impress of mortality, Geraghty was that man. Christopher Clinch knew now that his enemy was as good as a dead man ; and even in his new-born forgiveness and compunction, for Geraghty, in scarcely audible accents, pleaded for the putting away of all malice and ill-feeling, even in that solemn moment the thought flashed unbidden into Christopher Clinch's mind, as thoughts will flash even in such moments as these, of how very soon Geraghty's garden would be Geraghty's garden no longer. He looked past the prostrate Geraghty out through the window to where Geraghty's cabbages were just coming over ground, and, with his eye on the cabbages, Christopher Clinch granted Geraghty's last request, and vowed that he would bring Geraghty's lady-love to see Geraghty once more. With closed eyes and pallid lips, Geraghty lay back in bed.

"I can die happy now," he murmured, "your Reverence hears that; I can die happy."

* * * * *

At eleven o'clock the next morning the inside car from Rath brought Geraghty's lady-love to Geraghty's hall door. Christopher Clinch led his daughter into the presence of Geraghty, beside whose bed stood the rector. There was a fair in Aughrim that day and Christopher Clinch was all impatience to get to the fair. Away to the fair went Christopher Clinch, leaving his daughter behind him. The rector seemed to wish to detain him, but Geraghty, with the caprice of a sick man, would have him begone. The rector smiled a little absently, but the rector's best faculties being engrossed in the task of making two hundred a year do the work of five, it is not wonderful that he should be at times a little absent and self-absorbed. So away to the fair went Christopher Clinch; and back again in two hours came Christopher Clinch and the inside car to the door of Geraghty's dwelling. At the door the rector, still smiling, met him.

"Hush!" he said, raising his hand, "he is sleeping quietly; he has borne it better than we could have hoped."

"Borne it," repeated Christopher Clinch, "borne what?"

The rector smiled a little more broadly.

"His marriage with your daughter," he replied gently, as one who would recall Christopher Clinch's attention.

The eyeballs of Christopher Clinch started from their sockets, the jaw of Christopher Clinch fell beneath his collar, the chest of Christopher Clinch heaved with a mighty passion. With a bound he passed the smiling rector, with a bound he reached Geraghty's bedside.

"LIAR," he roared, "*liar*, ruffian, cheat, DEVIL. Come home," he cried, turning to his daughter, "come home, I tell ye."

But his daughter wouldn't go home. His daughter had not the smallest intention (so she said) of leaving her beloved Geraghty.

Geraghty opened his eyes and groaned, once, twice, thrice—groaned heavily and breathlessly.

"Take him away," he gasped feebly, "he's killing me."

Forth they thrust Christopher Clinch, shouting and blasphem-

ing, into the street. He went to the lawyer, he went to all the lawyers in Dublin for that matter; but it was no use; all the lawyers in Great Britain and Ireland couldn't unmarry his daughter now. Geraghty's lawful wife was she—married by her own parish clergyman, by special licence, in the presence of two competent witnesses—and Geraghty's lawful wife she would remain as long as Geraghty lived. And Geraghty lived and thrrove; Geraghty arose like a giant refreshed with sleep. His eyes grew bright, and his nose grew red, and his tongue grew loud once more ; and Christopher Clinch sat in his house up at Rath and saw Geraghty strong and well, and saw—oh, sad and bitter sight—saw Geraghty and Geraghty's own wife walking together in Geraghty's own garden.

A Day at Versailles.

By ETHEL F. HEDDLE.

APRIL was at its loveliest when we went from Paris for a day at Versailles. We had had stormy inclement weather, with bitterly cold winds and drenching rain ; but sunshine had come at last, and we said as we passed the trees in the Luxembourg Gardens on our way to the station, "We shall find the trees nearly out at Versailles," and we were not disappointed.

The town seemed positively to swarm with soldiers—they were everywhere, under the trees on the long straight road, in the restaurants, by the station—small men with their odd, wide red trousers and, what seemed to us, lamentable want of physique and manliness ! It was almost noon when we reached Versailles, and we stood hesitating for a moment if we should lunch then or later, deciding to have a comfortable *déjeuner* before we started for the miles of parquet and pictures in the palace. So we left the hazy green alleys and the incessant rataplan, and turned into a quiet street, where we looked out for an unfashionable restaurant. We found it at last, and sat down happily by a bare table, on which presently a dainty little Frenchwoman put knives and forks and glasses. Opposite were four *ouvriers* in their dark blue blouses, eating bread and drinking claret, and presently our own exquisitely cooked meal of "*bif steak*" and, later on, omelette was before us, and was much enjoyed.

Our leader then flourished her Baedeker, and with an "*Allons, mes enfants,*" we left the room. That Baedeker, though carried faithfully through the day, and pored over by its possessor at stolen moments, had been condemned by the third of the trio, whose detestation for guide books, strings of dates and historical details was well known, and with a half sigh *notre tante* submitted, peace being preferable to history, especially on a day of pleasure. And then, after paying our modest one franc twenty-five each, we went down the straight French road, and emerged before the palace. Baedeker sternly prohibited, we strolled through the endless galleries at an easy pace, pausing before any picture that took our fancy, and doing things in a most

unorthodox tourist manner. For Margot had been here before, and said openly she detested historical pictures and portraits, and wanted to get through them and be off to the Trianons, so she sailed along with her fair head in its big hat tossed back, while the dear aunt and I peeped at Baedeker surreptitiously, were caught and scorned, and then, coming upon a portrait of Mary, "*reine d'Ecosse et de France*," stopped short. It seemed so odd somehow to find Scotland's queen here, and to remember how happy she was in the gay court of France, "*la reine blanche*," petted, fêted, admired before her fate took her to gloomy Ecosse and to all the woes and mistakes of her life. We are apt to forget she was France's queen as well as Scotland's!

The pictures were interesting, of course, and taken singly, or say half a dozen per week, might have been fairly grasped. Their multitude now defied anything but the passing glance, and even that grew into a tired stare before we left the slippery polished galleries upstairs and descended. Below were the halls where the German sick and wounded lay, under the enormous canvases in which Napoleon had chronicled his triumphs at Berlin and Vienna. It must have been a curious sense of the irony of Fate which possessed even these stolid Teutons as they lay there and watched the sun streaming in upon the representation of Napoleon's pictured glory. Where was that glory now since *they* were here, and the nation which had been a world's conqueror lay helpless at their feet?

Downstairs, too, is that exquisite statue, the "*Dernier jour de Napoléon*." He is sitting in his chair, looking steadily and yet blankly before him, an old man now, and yet it seemed to me with a world's history written on the strange, inscrutable, impassive, *dying* face. The mingled strength, delicacy, relentlessness and cruelty in the face are quite untranslatable. The delicacy is there, in the fine nostrils and exquisitely moulded lips, a fragment of the same beauty that fascinates you in the Louvre picture, and yet the strength strikes you as if with the chill of a naked sword held to the face. And there is a tragedy in the look beyond expression. The dying king, exiled, humiliated, broken-hearted—abased, and yet never for one moment yielding—seems to sit looking down the ages. Does he see France as she is now?—his own glory dimmed in the long perspective of the years, fading as the gold is fading and

tarnished on the dome of Les Invalides, under which he rests? He who did so much and conquered so much, does he see how Time's revenge will conquer *him*?

We left the statue silently, and wandered out into the grounds. The famous fountains were silent, of course, and the long *façade* of the palace seemed to frown coldly upon us as we walked over the grand walks, and Margot stared into the Sphinx's face, asking all sorts of odd and flippant questions in her own bright irrelevant way. And then, since the Sphinx would tell her nothing, we took a cab to the Trianons, leaving stately Versailles "done" in a perfunctory manner that would have driven Mr. Cook crazy. But oh! the sweetness of that Petit Trianon after the immensity and the cold polished grandeur of the palace! How Marie Antoinette must have loved it! Immensity always chills, however it may be admired, and now we all heaved an instinctive sigh of relief as the little *home* came in view, and we went upstairs. The rooms are mostly as the queen left them. Her bedroom windows were open to the sunny glades, and the bursting trees of the *jardin anglais*, and the fresh sweet air flooded the room. Above the mantelpiece was a pastel of the gentle-faced, sad-eyed Dauphin, with his star hanging over his little breast, and the lace lappets of his coat open. In this bright little home Marie Antoinette and Louis escaped with delight from the ceremonious etiquette of Versailles; here they played at Arcadia and were happy—she with her *laiterie* and her summer houses and her *jardin anglais*. And how they would look back, in the tragic future, to the sunny *petit* home, where life gave them its sweetest moments, and they played at being shepherd and shepherdess with their children. Le Petit Trianon is pathetic beyond all words in its very beauty and rest. We strolled through the grounds, by the rustic bridge and artificial pond, and peeped into the summer house where the king and queen drank their *chocolat*, while the children played on the grass; the paper, with its gay cupids and wreathed roses, was falling off the walls, and flapped dismally in the evening air, and Margot drew us away hurriedly. She said Le Petit Trianon was too sad for words, if one knew any history, which was always a mistake.

However, Le Grand Trianon has more cheerful memories. Madame de Maintenon lived here, and Josephine, and here the

custodian told us Queen Victoria and her husband visited the king, and slept in a gorgeous bed which looked distinctly uncomfortable, for all its grandeur !

Napoleon, too, spent some time here, and had a clock in every room. One is a magnificent bouquet of gold roses, the dial of which is in the heart of one, with the minute dial below. Here the hangings and the furniture are very beautiful, and in very good preservation, and it may be added that, unlike the sepulchral glories of Windsor Castle, they are not hidden by hideous chintzes, which are eyesores, even to uncultured tourists ! The April light was growing a little cold as we stepped into the waiting cab and gave the order for the station, and Margot sighed as she leant back.

"Sight-seeing, even with a condemned Baedeker and an obedient party, is tiring ! I shall dream I am doomed to walk on parquet with high-heeled shoes all my life, and to learn the victories of Napoleon, with dates, by heart before the morning. What do you say, mother ?"

Aunt A. smoothes her guide-book regretfully. "I really should have liked to know, Margot, which was the *salle* in which the Emperor of Germany was proclaimed. I am certain that attendant deceived me ! If it was the *Salle des Glaces* — "

"Look it up when you get home, or believe it is the one you wish. What does it matter ? It was a delicate question in any case to ask the man."

"I don't think he minded," Aunt A. says placidly. "After all it does not make any difference in *his* life."

"And the French have no patriotism, you think ? They don't make as much fuss over it as the Germans. Well, E., and are you asleep ? The parquet was too much for you too, eh ?"

"No," I answered ; but I did not say that my memory had gone back to the eyes of the statue again, and I was puzzling over their expression still. And then, as I thought of that strange king, his glory and his ignominy, his genius and his defeat, his infinite greatness and his infinite littleness, I could only think of one sentence that seemed to express and sum it all up—"The pity of it, the pity of it, Iago !" And so we left Versailles.

The Revenge of Reuben Royd.

By MARY HAMPDEN.

IN TWO PARTS.

PART I.

"DOES any one know you are in England?"

"No; I wrote from Melbourne to say I would return, but there are a few technicalities to be gone through, and I shall lie *perdu* until I'm wanted."

"You will not take advantage of your enormous fortune? Not burst upon the London season, glorious in the glamour of your gold?"

"You sarcastic fellow! No; it's rather too soon after my uncle's death, and, though I never saw the old man, I'd like to treat him decently now he's gone. My affairs are in the hands of my lawyers; there are a few legacies, of course, but the executors are abroad and nothing can be done till they return. Why do you speak of gold as though you despised it, Royd? You used not to be like that in the old days."

"Years alter men," my companion answered, as a dull smile passed swiftly across his face. "Gold! What human being will not sell heart and soul for it? What life has ever passed without falling victim to the gold-fever? You tell me," he continued eagerly, "that you are sure of wealth, that you are worth twenty thousand a year?"

"Yes; that is the figure."

"Then you are sure of all the world can give, you are worth all that is counted advantageous. You may command smiles and rule flatterers, obtain social renown, speak and find listeners, cheat, lie, and count on pardon. All this gold can do. Accept the congratulations of a man who spends his life in vainly coveting a fortune such as yours!"

Reuben Royd stretched forth his hand and gripped mine, then threw himself back into the shadow of his elbow chair, his face recovering rapidly from the tension of passion; bending forward

when a mere moment had elapsed, I looked into his eyes in wonder, for no trace remained of the intense feeling which had hissed out his rapid words :

"Gold—gold!"

I shall never forget the singular hatred that breathed in his utterance, nor cease to wonder at the pallor but absolute calm of his countenance when the mental tempest had swept past.

I offered the cigars ; and, having thus done my best for him, relapsed into a happy reverie over my own prospects.

Just forty, but feeling years younger, with all the world before me, and an income of twenty thousand per annum to spend in it, what wonder if the future was tinted in roseate hues? And there was another reason why my luck rejoiced me ; far away in Australia where I had been spending my impecunious days, little brown-haired, blue-eyed Bertha Westonby was waiting for me to come back to her. She was poor, very poor—but she didn't know I was rich, and we had been as happy building our fancy castles for the future as many engaged paupers have been before us.

My lot was a complete contrast to that of the man I called my friend. Reuben Royd and Arthur Veriton! Our names had been coupled together in our childhood, in school days, and for a time longer, though he was only a tradesman's son and I the nephew of one of England's few moneyed agricultural gentlemen. We had not met for twenty years, since we came of age together, and had heard nothing of each other since. Royd, I knew, was as poor as he had ever been, and I had come home to welcome wealth and luxury. We had chanced upon each other in one of London's crowded streets, and I had persuaded him to come back to my rooms with me that we might enjoy a smoke and a chat over old days ; prosperity coming unexpectedly makes the heart tender to those who are still in the sloughs of poverty, and I was casting about in my mind for some idea how to benefit my erstwhile friend.

The pale rigid outline of his harsh features and the web-like wrinkles round his sunken eyes spoke of the work of time ; he had gained a hollow in the cheek, a glitter shone in his swift glance ; his had been a dark face at best, betraying the scholar's vice—cynicism—breeding distrust by sinister smiles, and still more sinister gravity ; now it was darker.

Passing his fingers through his black curls he turned to me suddenly, and I noticed that as he spoke his gaze sought mine. "Truthful yet," I said to myself, "but unscrupulous. What has changed him?"

"Veriton, you are an enviable man" (his voice was soft and melodious); "you will never know the sorrow which has *made* my life."

"*Made* it? Wrecked it, you mean, old fellow."

"For good or evil it is made," he answered, "as an oak blasted by the lightning is made a thing of no value, the promise gone for ever, only the charred shell of wood remaining."

"Oh, you mustn't talk so." I endeavoured to console him with some of the good honest home truths I had learnt partly in my youth, some of them so early that they were taught me by my mother's knee, and which I had trusted in ever since with an ever-growing faith in their wisdom: "A man shouldn't let his life be blasted by sorrow; we human beings are a trifle better than inanimate nature, I hope. Pull yourself together, Royd, and think how much of the great work of the world has been done by hearts that have been well-nigh broken—yes, and nobly done too. I never was one of those philosophers who believed nothing worth doing."

"Shall I tell you my story?"

"I should like to hear it awfully, but don't talk about it if—if it bores you."

He smiled, and replied by commencing his recital as indifferently as a child repeats its lesson; true, the suppressed low voice revealed more than his manner, but neither pause nor gesture declared the tale to be the secret of his life.

"Nineteen years ago, Lord and Lady Loriston and their only daughter, Lady Mabel Loris, took up their residence at Morecombe Hall. You remember the place, Veriton?"

"Perfectly."

"They had one son, a boy whose health broke down at Eton, and the child was brought home to be privately taught. The tutor was a man of low birth, but whose parents had contrived to send him to college, so he was fitted for the task of education. The lessons progressed day after day, and every evening when the paid work was accomplished he studied, for he was ambitious."

"The tutor was?"

"An unworldly dreamer, one so young that he learnt to love—myself. How shall I describe Mabel Loris? Tall and seventeen, she united the wit and frolic of a hoyden with the promise of a queenly womanhood; she accepted the homage of her brother's tutor, enchanted by the romance which varied the monotony of country pleasures; it was charming to have a secret—to reply archly to whispered compliments, to call society 'so terribly prosaic,' to deplore its 'hatred of true love.' Shall I explain to you how they met every morning by the edge of the lake to encourage each other with assurances of their unalterable fidelity? Shall I tell you how his dreams were dreamt? What future greatness he, in his pride, imagined would be his; how he would lay a glorious career before her feet some day, when men would call him noble; he, of low birth? Are all young men enthusiasts? Probably. I will not weary you with this tutor's fancies.

"A day passed when they thus exchanged their vows; a day came when her promise was denied. She had been away to town for her first season, and on her return to Morecombe the tutor told her how the time had fared with him, how he had kept tryst with her in his heart, thinking of her dear face, longing for her return. She answered, with a laugh in which lurked fear, that she could not let him speak of the old folly now, that she had learned her own mind; how foolish they had been! Vows? She would not remember them. 'I was such a child,' she pleaded. 'If you would only forgive me, and think no more about it? You are young, too, Reuben—Mr. Royd—you will so easily forget!'

"Lady Mabel married a moneyed widower before the year was over, and if the tutor thinks of her? Well, no matter; she is free again now, and he is still poor. That is the story of my life."

"A sad story, but not sad enough to make you a cynic. Why, man! Everything changes as it grows; why not a girl's heart? Perhaps she was dazzled by the world's promise, influenced by friends and parents. You have not much right to blame her, seeing how young you both were."

"Blame her," he cried, losing for an instant the stern self-control of his set face. "If ever I can humble her, I will do it. Love!"

Yes, it is the fondest love that turns to fiercest hate ; I know the day will come when my revenge shall be fulfilled."

"For heaven's sake don't speak so wildly, Royd ! Mortal man is not a right instrument of vengeance, and when he seeks it he only loses his own soul. I'd rather think that some day you may find a woman sweet and tender-hearted, a home queen, not a society sovereign, like my Bertha—one who will teach you that human creatures should forgive each other's faults, not try to punish them."

"You have found her ? "

"Yes ;" and then I told him of my Australian sweetheart, my blue-eyed, brown-haired betrothed ; and, after the manner of man, was selfishly absorbed in the recital.

I, Arthur Veriton, picturing the future, dwelling on the past, ceased to speculate on the revenge of Reuben Royd.

PART II.

"WE are in distress ; come to me at once, for I know you will help us.

"BERTHA WESTONBY."

The words of the telegram I had just received rang in my ears with monotonous persistence as I hastened to my friend's lodgings to discuss the matter with him. What could the distress be ? Money losses ? Then, fortunately, I was in a position to relieve it ; at any rate I must obey the summons instantly.

"Royd," I exclaimed, "will you go to my lawyers and explain my absence ? And stay in town ; don't go away until I come back. There is a cheque to pay all expenses." (I thrust into his hand the equivalent of five hundred pounds.) "It will help to set you up in some literary work by which you can make a name."

"I have doubled the money you gave me some weeks ago, when we first met, Veriton ; I shall treble this, and then my ambition will be within my reach."

"Don't lose it. I'm glad you are ambitious."

"I am enough of a fatalist not to fear chance. You will not let any one but your lawyers know where you are, I suppose ?"

"No, I haven't any friends ; I don't know a soul in town."

"Which way are you going?"

"Aberdeen Company, *via* the Cape ; forty-two-days!"

So we parted.

During the voyage I was harassed by anxiety for my little Bertha, but when I reached Melbourne, it was only to find I had been tricked by some one ; she had sent me no telegram, they were in no distress ; the message which had called me away from London had been the work of some hand unknown.

It is needless for me to dwell upon the return journey ; suffice it to say that when I again entered Royd's lodgings it was only to find him gone.

"Veriton, I congratulate you," said an old college chum whom I met by accident in the street, and to whom I introduced myself. "She is a beautiful woman, and you are a lucky man, and no mistake!"

"How did you hear, Lester? I thought the secret was safe for some time."

"Haven't you seen the *Trumpeter*?"

He pulled it from his pocket and showed it me, and I scanned the page anxiously only to find the following announcement :—

"A marriage has been arranged between Mr. Veriton, of Vere, nephew of the late Ambrose Veriton, Esq., and Lady Mabel Beauregard, widow of the late Colonel Beauregard, of Silston, Notts."

The paper fell from my hands. Then Reuben Royd had usurped my place, had burst upon society in the glamour of my gold, had passed himself off as the fortunate inheritor of my uncle's thousands! Two months and a half had elapsed since my departure ; in that time he had deluded Lady Mabel into accepting him ; he, the penniless man, whom I had assisted ; this, then, was the revenge which he had planned.

"The affair is being discussed everywhere," said Lester, amazed at my silence. "I've only just come back from Scotland, but I find October absolutely gay in town, and all thanks to you. By-the-bye, you didn't ask me to your ball to-night—but it's not too late yet."

"My ball? Where?"

"Why at the family mansion in Grosvenor Square, to be sure. Good heavens! Veriton, what is the matter? Have you gone off your head that you don't know where you've invited your own guests?"

"There has been some mistake; but, old man, whatever you do, don't chatter. Certainly, I should have asked you—quite an old friend—you will come, of course?"

"Yes—happy!—but you won't have time to get home and dress if you don't look sharp. Do you know it's a quarter past eight already?"

I took a hansom and drove to my rooms; then, correctly attired, to my own house, which I had never entered, but of which Royd had taken possession. I was late, but contrived to enter unnoticed with a stream of guests.

"Capital fellow, Veriton!" I heard Lord C. explain to a group of political men on my right, "a strong Tory; he ought to be useful to us when he's married."

"Yes," lisped one of the year's beauties, "and so interesting. I never met any one with a better manner."

There was a crush on the great staircase, and, looking over the sea of heads, I saw the host receiving his friends; his usually pale face was flushed with excitement, his lips wreathed with smiles. I was near enough to hear him murmur:

"*You* do not need to hear me speak a welcome."

A lady was standing with her hand momentarily in his; there was a meaning glance passing among the bystanders.

"Lady Mabel is looking radiant to-night."

"Yes; and what a perfect gown!"

This, then, was the woman to whom he was for the second time engaged. I did not wish to make a scene before all the people, partly for her sake, partly because I would not expose the man whom I had once called "friend;" and I pressed my way back down the stairs, determined to seek a refuge where I might observe events, myself unnoticed. A door on the left of the hall yielding to a push, I found myself in a corridor—then in a less brightly illuminated room—a library, evidently. Luckily my footsteps had been noiseless, for I saw I was not alone. Royd was standing by the fireplace, and beside him his betrothed, the lady with the sweet worn face and weary eyes. Whilst I had been groping my way by dark passages he had left his post of

duty to snatch a few moments of her society. Surely, deceived as I had been, I had the right to play eavesdropper. Drawing back behind a screen I watched and listened.

" You would always be true to me, Mabel ? "

I hardly recognized the hollow voice as that of my friend ; his tone was usually silvern, smooth, musical to a degree ; this was the voice of a man whose soul reproached him, whose life was a lie, yet what meant its pathos ? Had he pursued revenge only to rouse the old love to be in its turn *his* pursuer ?

" You do not doubt me, dear ? Years ago when I was quite a child I was false to one who cared for me ; but I was so young, so dependent upon those who influenced and persuaded me. I have told you the tale—how he was only a tutor, a poor, low-born man, so rough, so proud, that I half feared him. Yet I have regretted my broken promise all my life. Arthur, you must not be angry with me if I say I think sometimes I love you for your likeness to him."

Her head was leant against his shoulder, and the firelight shone full on his dark face as he kissed her.

" If he were to come back—to plead with you for a renewal of your old love, to tell you how he has dreamt of you day and night, how he has kept tryst with you in his heart—what would you say to him, if he were poor as before ? "

" But you—Arthur ! "

" Forget me for a while ; it would please me to know you were true to your old love—dead he is most likely. I do not fear the dead ! "

" Then, poverty would make no difference ; but, Arthur, why do you look at me so strangely ? "

" If he had cheated you, lied to you—if he had lived his life seeking revenge upon you for your broken vow—would you forgive—could you love him still ? "

" That would be too terrible. He would have no right to look for pardon. I was a thoughtlessly cruel girl, but I never wished him ill. Yet true love, even so far past, has a memory ; because he was once dear to me I could forgive him—and then, who knows ? How could a woman's heart fail to care for one whom she had utterly forgiven ? It is the way of you men, Arthur, to grow cynical and rave at our fickleness, but all the while you are longing to believe in us again ; and at last the day comes when

you learn that the safest, and perhaps the noblest, love is touched with pity."

He had thrown himself into a chair and had buried his tell-tale face between his hands.

"Oh, my God! Is it for this I schemed?" I heard him groan.

"You? . . . Reuben!"

"Mabel, I have brooded over the wrong you did me, until my anger had become a monomania! I have pictured you in my thoughts as a heartless, callous flirt! Yes, let me tell you," he exclaimed, as she turned from him sobbing bitterly, "I have forced myself to hate you; and then followed my plan. I, posing before the world as the intellectual, high-born man of fortune, would win your love only to cast it from me—to jilt you, as you once jilted me! The real Arthur Veriton may return at any moment, and I—I have lingered over my revenge until the crushed down love has risen from it. . . . You, whose pride I wished to pain, have taught me self-contempt. . . . You said just now that if Reuben Royd begged for your pardon you would grant it him! . . . Those words have taught me how I should have pardoned . . . how I have misjudged you! . . . Mabel! If true love even so far past has a memory—before I go . . . forgive me!"

* * * * *

Three days later I met my friend Lester at the club.

"What is all this I hear about you, Veriton, and the other man? There is not any truth in it, is there?"

"As much truth as there usually is in gossip," I answered, with as careless an air as I could assume.

"By Jove! it's no use trying that on with me. People say that you sanctioned his goings on—that you let him take your name, and hoax society—and deceive Lady Mabel into an engagement!"

"The announcement in the *Trumpeter* has been contradicted, and I want you to seem to believe the tale, Lester,—it isn't quite right—but for the lady's sake, and a little for his, too, we are going to pretend it was. There was an old love affair between them, years before she married Beauregard, and they made it up again; but Royd was one to whom the world denied the title 'gentleman'; now that it has been trapped into receiving him,

it will not own itself duped. Theirs will be an indefinitely long engagement, lasting their lives long perhaps, but Lady Mabel's choice has been declared charming and distinguished by the most competent judges. Of course there is another side to the tale. I, in my turn, was attached to a dear little girl on the other side of the water—a poor, insignificant, ignorant dear little girl—and I wanted to win her before shocking her with an account of my wealth. Leaving Royd to play my part in England, I went back to Australia and—well—you'll hear of my wedding in a few weeks, as soon as her people bring her across. Romantic tale, isn't it?"

" You don't expect me to believe it?"

" No ; but persuade others to do so."

" Will Lady Mabel forgive him?"

" She has, Lester ; never was a man so changed ! He has learned to doubt himself—to acknowledge vengeance is a weapon too mighty for the weak human hand to wield. I should not be surprised—women are such strange creatures—if some day she does not repay him his revenge by love and trust."

A Hunting Adventure

FOUNDED ON FACT.

"TUMBLE up, old chap, or we shall be late."

These words were uttered in rather a loud key by a tall man, dressed in a picturesque garb, consisting of high boots, wide flapping hat, loose shirt, with a gaudy-coloured sash tied round his waist, into which were stuck a couple of pistols and a wicked-looking knife.

He was standing outside a low tent which formed one of a group of two or three, dimly discerned through the darkness by the uncertain light of several horn lanterns, held by wild-looking Indian boys, who were standing round a group of wiry little Mexican horses, or sitting cross-legged placidly smoking.

This appeal produced no results ; the tall man repeated it in rather a more impatient tone, and not in what might be considered the language generally used by the politest circles, but at any rate it achieved the desired effect. A voice from inside the tent, desiring his friend to desist from making such a confounded row, was followed by the appearance of a young man who had to stoop quite low to pass under the doorway, and when outside, stretched himself to his full height with a portentous yawn. He was of slighter build than the first speaker, whom we had better at once introduce by the name of Adolphus Mannering, a captain in Her Majesty's Royal ——th, in which distinguished regiment our younger friend had just received a commission. Adolphus, or "Dolly," as of course he was called, had at once constituted himself "guide, philosopher, and friend" of young Edward Stanley, which accounts for our finding them together on the plains of Mexico at three o'clock in the morning. A first-rate sportsman, and accustomed to all sorts of adventure, it is not wonderful that "Dolly" Mannering had imbued young Stanley with an enthusiastic admiration for the chase, and he had found no difficulty in persuading him to join a party of Englishmen who meant to spend a couple of months on the plains or pampas of America, for the sake of hunting the wild deer of the country.

Now, with cheery stir and bustle, the party were assembling and mounting their little steeds, which, though hardly taller than English polo ponies, possessed the strength and endurance of full-sized thoroughbred horses. The party consisted of three other men, an old gentleman—Mr. Fraser—who had spent all his life in roving from country to country in search of adventure, and his son Ralph, who had been educated in England, and had just come out to join his father, a bright, high-spirited lad of sixteen, whose coolness in danger and cheerfulness of disposition had endeared him to all his companions, and made him the very apple of his father's eye. The last, but by no means least in his own estimation, was a tall and muscular half-breed, Pedro by name, who acted as guide to the party.

The object of such an early start was twofold. It was important to get the sport over and themselves safely back under cover, before the burning heat of the day had come on, which no one but the native Guachos, or Indians, could stand without danger of sunstroke. Also, they had to reach a certain gorge, about sixteen miles off, before the sun rose, in order to surround and cut off the herds of small deer who came down to drink at sunrise. Their senses of hearing and smell were so very acute, that frequently our hunters had been disappointed by arriving a few minutes after the dawn had appeared, and the wary little animals had become aware of their danger and fled out of sight before a trigger had been pulled.

To-day they were determined to be in time, so in about ten minutes they were all mounted, and, led by Pedro, were swinging away into the darkness at a smart canter. Edward Stanley had by this time become accustomed to the marvellous sagacity of his mustang, who, while the ground was perfectly invisible to European eyes, would steadily make his way, avoiding pitfalls or boulders, and occasionally scrambling like a cat down a little ravine and up on the other side, while all his rider had to do was to sit tight, often no easy task, and on an ordinary saddle almost impossible, but the high-peaked Mexican saddle made it much easier, and accidents were rarely heard of.

Young Ralph Fraser, riding alongside of him, beguiled the way with scraps of comic songs and a good deal of disjointed conversation, when they came upon a level place, but for the most part they galloped along in silence, except for a muttered,

"Hold up, you brute," or some exclamation to the same effect in Spanish, occasionally addressed to the mustangs. After an hour had passed in this manner, the first horseman, Pedro, pulled up, and all the others did the same. He dismounted, and enforcing silence by gestures, left the mustangs in charge of the Indians (who at once composed themselves in all sorts of attitudes and lit their pipes), and led the way on foot for about a mile further in silence. Their eyes had become accustomed to the darkness, and they could make out that the comparatively level plain they had been crossing had become more diversified in character. The rocky boulders had become higher and more frequent, and they had to pick their way with some care, for the ground seemed full of gaping fissures and cracks owing to the great heat, which in some cases were wide enough to require a good leap to cross. The hay-like, coarse grass, which had nearly covered the ground, now seemed dried up, and only appeared in patches, while the dead stillness of the night was broken by the sound of running water at a little distance.

Presently they came into the deeper blackness of a clump of trees at the edge of a ravine, and then Pedro stopped, looked round and signalled to them all to follow closely, while he produced a rope which he had wound round his waist, offering to attach it to young Ralph Fraser, who, having but just joined them, was not so experienced a cragsman as the rest. Ralph, however, made such energetic gestures of dissent that Pedro withdrew the offer, though shaking his head, and slowly they began their downward climb.

It was a perilous undertaking, for the slate-like rock which jutted out in the sides of the chasm was slippery and brittle, and sometimes a hasty exclamation and a heavy crash betrayed that a large piece had broken off under the tread of one of the party.

At last they reached the bottom in safety, and there, running noisily over the rocks that obstructed its channel, was the little stream whose sound had guided them so far.

Pedro arranged his party with promptitude, placing the guns at about a hundred yards apart along the sides of the stream, and cautioning them on no account to utter a word or make any movement which could betray their presence. He kept Ralph with him, and posted the other three separately. It was only just in time, for just as Pedro had given his last instruction in a

whisper, and crouched down with his companion behind a large fragment of rock, a certain luminous glow seemed to pervade the atmosphere, objects before dark and indistinct became clearer, and suddenly, with a rapidity unknown in European climates, the sun leapt up and irradiated the landscape.

Edward Stanley, lying at full length in the dried-up channel of a little tributary stream, entirely buried by the long grass and vegetation, ventured to raise his head and peep out. It was a lovely scene that met his gaze. The side of the gorge that they had descended with such pains in the dark towered above him on the left hand, its sides clothed with magnificent tropical verdure ; on his right rushed, sparkling and breaking into a thousand little cascades, the little river ; while scarcely a hundred yards away, on the other side, rose the other wall, stupendous in height, and to all appearance perfectly inaccessible, for the rocks seemed to hang over much more than on the side they had descended, and, when no earth could find a lodgment, no vegetation took root. It rose bare and desolate, but unspeakably grander than the more cultivated side, which was now lit up by the sunbeams, though they were unable to penetrate into the deep recesses and caves formed by the overhanging rocks.

Hush ! What was that ? Edward Stanley held his breath and listened. Was it only the rattling of a shower of stones ? Or was it, yes, it was, the quick patter of numberless little hoofs ! He cautiously raised himself to a kneeling position, cocked his rifle, and waited with bated breath. Nearer came the sound, till at last he saw, about two hundred yards away, a whole herd of small deer trotting down towards the water. He had time to admire the grace and agility of their movements as, springing lightly from rock to rock, ever and anon stopping to sniff the air with their sensitive nostrils, the unsuspecting creatures approached his ambush. No thought of pity crossed his mind now for the happiness he was about to destroy ; the sportsman's instinct, which some say is but a relic of the savage nature in us, flushed his cheek, strung his nerves, and made his hand steady. Now they have passed him, now they are crowding together at a place where the stream widens, when Pedro's shrill whistle is heard, and simultaneously a volley of shots is fired, scattering death and destruction among them. The sportsmen spring from their lairs and hurry towards the scene, while the affrighted deer

speed past them, springing lightly up the sides of the gorge, and leaving behind them no fewer than four lifeless bodies. Wild with excitement Ralph rushes to the spot, eagerly claiming one as his especial prey, which Pedro good-naturedly agrees to. Now the sport is over, and Pedro's whistle again summons the Guachos, who have been waiting for the signal. They come bounding down the sides of the precipice, like so many wild cats, to look after the game, and our party shoulder their guns and prepare for their upward climb.

Ralph thinks it very stupid to return so soon, though it is pointed out to him that they must be home before the full heat of the sun, that now it is nearly seven o'clock, and they have a good half-hour's climb up, and then a walk of about a mile before their sixteen miles' ride home. He is anxious to vary their route, and suggests that he and Edward Stanley should walk about a mile up the stream to where the gorge narrows, so as to almost meet at the top, and where he declares the climbing is much easier and shorter. Mr. Fraser looks to Pedro, who gives it as his opinion that the young men would be wiser to keep with the older party, but that, barring a little extra fatigue, there is no real danger. So off they go, Edward in front, taking the precaution to tie the rope round his waist, more to satisfy Mr. Fraser than for the thought of any real necessity. The two young fellows stride along cheerily together, while the older men begin their laborious ascent, intending to wait at the top for their young companions.

Presently Ralph stops, and looking up at a steep face of the rock declares his intention of mounting there, but, after one or two attempts, he gives it up, and they go on to where a sort of path has been made by the passage of a huge rock which had been loosened by some shock, and has torn its way down the face of the cliff, uprooting trees and dislodging boulders by its weight, till it has buried itself half way in the bed of the stream. The way seems practicable here, and Edward measures it with his eye, and thinks the rock certainly seems a good deal lower than where they had descended, while Ralph joyously shouts that they will be up first, and "take the shine out of the governor, by George!"

Now begins a scramble harder than either of them had contemplated, for the soft, slaty ground gives way with every foot-

step, and only by clinging to every root and branch that grew out of the side could they obtain any foothold, while the higher they got the more precipitous grew the ascent, till Edward sorely repented having consented to Ralph's boyish plan, and most sincerely wished himself and his young friend safely up. At last, getting a temporary foothold against a gnarled root of a tree, he turned to see how he was getting on. Ralph, with his face scarlet with exertion and his hands bleeding, was crawling on all fours round an overhanging piece of rock, and Edward held his breath till he saw him safely past, and with one foot in a cleft and both hands grasping at a friendly branch, stop for a minute's rest. Then Edward called down to him to keep steady, as he was going to throw him the rope, which, with much difficulty and some danger, he had succeeded in unwinding from his person. It was already fitted with loops, and it was an immense relief to Edward's mind when he saw the boy, too dazed and giddy to object, slip it over his head and under his arms. So far so good; but now, when he resumed his upward climb, the added weight, though Ralph struggled bravely to help himself on, was almost too much for his strength. Again and again he had to pause, and clutching desperately at anything firm, to stand with his back to the rock and his eyes shut, vainly endeavouring to still the beating of his heart, which seemed as though it must burst his breast, while the rock above him seemed to tower higher and blacker until he dared not look down. Certainly he cursed his own foolhardiness, and if it had not been for the sense of another life depending on his, he must have let go his hold. Higher and higher he mounted, his progress seeming to advance but by inches, while trees, rocks and sky seemed blended in a kaleidoscopic confusion.

But what does he hear, as for the hundredth time he stops to take breath? Is it a bird's cry? No! thank Heaven! it is the sound of a well-known voice, no other than that of his friend "Dolly," who, anxious at their prolonged absence, has strolled back to the edge of the chasm, and cautiously peering over, has discerned the two struggling figures. The sound gives Edward fresh courage, and shouting to Ralph, who, boy like, at once recovers his failing energies, with many a scramble and struggle attains a kind of platform about thirty feet from the top, and lies there panting and exhausted.

Suddenly a wild cry echoes up the cliff; it is Ralph's voice, but so changed, Edward can hardly recognize it.

"The rope is breaking! oh, Edward! save me!"

Horrorstruck, he looks over. It is too true! The rope, dragged and frayed against the sharp rock, has parted all its strands save one, and only that one stands between the boy and a fate that he shudders to contemplate, unless he can manage to hold on. He is lying face downwards, convulsively grasping a root of a magnificent geranium, whose scarlet blossoms profusely decorate the rugged cliff and hang in clusters over the edge. But as Edward looks he sees the root is gradually drawing out of the ground, and the boy is slipping by inches, while the rope is gradually untwisting and untwisting, and it seems that but a few moments must bring the end.

After one instant of dumb horror Edward grasps the situation, and shouts in a loud and cheerful voice to the terrified boy. "All right, old fellow, keep your heart up and *hold on*. Dolly is here with another rope!"

But even as he says these brave words he glances up at his friend, and his heart dies within him. There is a look of blank despair on Dolly's usually cheerful face that speaks for itself. No rope! Good heavens, what is to be done?

By this time the rest of the party have arrived, summoned by Mannering's shouts, and are looking over the edge with horror-struck faces. One or two of the Indians easily make their way to the ledge where Edward lies, but even they dare go no further. Beneath the ledge which Edward reached with a frantic spring on hearing his friend's voice, the rock shelves out for about five feet and then ceases. To this day Edward can never imagine how he got round it, but what was just possible coming up is perfectly impracticable going down; the loose stones had fallen after Edward had passed, and the little turf of vegetation that gave him an instant's foothold has gone with them, and from the edge of the rock there is a clear fall of 150 feet to the bottom.

Ralph has been climbing up a rather different route to avoid the rocks and shale that showered down behind his guide, and is lying in a sort of division between two rocks, which, if he could only keep his head, he might possibly get up. But the feeling of insecurity caused by the loss of his support added to the exhaustion of the climb has produced vertigo, and he seems to

have lost all sense of helping himself, save to cling with the tenacity of despair to his frail hold.

At length, as Edward gazes, the last strand of the rope gives, and the boy, with a wild shriek, disappears from sight.

In speechless horror Edward listens for the expected plunge of his body through the underwood, while imagination pictures the dull crash at the bottom ; but after an instant of dead silence he realizes the situation, and calls up to his friend above :

"He must have caught hold of something. Lower somebody down, for mercy's sake ! he may be saved yet."

"You *must* get up here first," was the reply ; "we have no other rope."

So Edward, with the effort of a despairing man, shaking off the sick giddiness that possesses him, scrambles hand over hand to the top. An excited group was there, but the hand to draw Edward up to the last step and to unloose the cord from his waist and eagerly to try its strength belongs to the most interested of all—Ralph's father, who, with a face white as death, appears perfectly self-possessed.

The rope is barely twenty feet long ; the only chance is for some one to go down to the ledge and be lowered from there. They all volunteer, but a young Indian, lithe and active as a cat, is chosen for the perilous task. Carefully he and Pedro climb down the rock, a far more difficult task than would be imagined, as the immense height turns even the strongest head giddy, and Mannerling has enough to do to revive his friend, who is in a half-sainting condition, while Mr. Fraser hurries off a couple of the servants on mustangs to the distant tents for brandy, ropes and many necessaries.

At last the two climbers have reached the rock, and Pedro is vainly endeavouring to find a sufficiently firm hold to attach the rope to, which is seemingly impossible, as after many vain attempts he calls up in a voice of despair that it cannot be done.

Edward, who by this time has recovered himself, shouts down to him to tie the rope round his own body and lie in the cleft as he had done.

At last, after what seem years to the agonized watchers above, this is done, and the young Indian, creeping down the rock backwards, is swung over the edge and disappears. A dangerous position truly. Nothing but a few feet of rope already frayed

and worn over his head, and one hundred and fifty feet of clear fall below him. The little stream looks like a silver thread in the distance. He hangs out in mid-air, being unable to reach the rock, even with his long pole, but even so how much preferable is his position to that of poor Ralph Fraser! Crouching head and knees together on a ledge so narrow as barely to allow him foothold, with the black rock overhanging him and quite invisible from above, he has given himself up, and only when he sees the wild figure of the Guacho some thirty feet above him does he venture to raise his head and gaze with the vacancy of despair. With a glad shout the Indian boy announces the fact, and is gently hauled up by willing hands to tell the glad news to the father.

But now what is to be done? There are no possible means of getting at the boy even if the rope were long enough, for any heavy body must necessarily hang at least ten feet away from him, and no human climber could possibly scramble down the bare face of the rock without swinging off into mid-air. There is nothing to be done until the return of the Indians but to shout cheerful messages down and promises of speedy relief. For a long time there is no reply. At length the heart-broken father and Mannering set off to run round the end of the gorge, which is nearly two miles off, in order to arrive opposite the place. When they reach the spot, and Mr. Fraser sees his precious only son in so fearful a position, seemingly hardly larger than some bird nestled up against the frowning cliff, with no visible means of support, his brave heart nearly fails him. Ralph can just see his father, and tries to raise his voice above a husky whisper, but the fearful sense of insecurity makes him feel that a word must topple him from his hold, and he sits silent, with all his energies, failing as they are, concentrated on holding on. His head is swimming ; the little silver thread below him seems to rise and entangle itself round his head, with a rushing, roaring sound in his ears ; the trees and ferns, gently waving, seem to become a horrible forest of green serpents and long arms and fingers extended to drag him down. He tries to think of a prayer, but nothing will come to his lips but some Latin lines he has learnt at school, and he repeats them over and over with a feverish persistency, knowing all the time there is no sense in them, but feeling that if he once ceases to repeat them he must loose his hold.

Hours pass in this way. The sun gets hotter and hotter. The

Indians return, bearing with them ropes and ladders, with blankets and strong brandy. Alas ! they can be no good except for the miserable watchers on the top. Pedro again despatches them for a small tent, which he has put up to shelter them from the burning sun, but Mr. Fraser cannot rest in it. He wanders aimlessly up and down, suggesting all sorts of wild plans, which he knows are useless, but he cannot refrain from. Indians have been sent in all directions to try and reach the boy, but in vain.

Edward Stanley has spent some hours in vainly endeavouring to scale the cliff again where he had originally done it, but even when he has got up to where Ralph had first slipped from he cannot reach him. The reason of this is that the long trailing geranium root had not broken short off, but had been drawn out of the ground by his weight, and so had let him down slowly till with the strength of despair he had grasped at the willow-like tree growing out of the crevice, which had bent at first with him and then broken short off, leaving him to slip down it until he found this foothold. If the root had given way all at once he must have been dashed to atoms, but as it was, the tree having broken close to the ground, gave him some slight support, while it was quite impossible for any other person to repeat the performance. The tent has been pitched on the opposite side of the gorge, where Mr. Fraser can have the melancholy satisfaction of seeing his son, though he cannot reach him. At last the long weary day has passed, and night has come on. Through a strong telescope Ralph can be seen to be in a sort of stupor, his eyes closed, his head thrown back, mercifully unconscious of his position. The night passes by, oh, so slowly ! Pedro and Captain Mannerling have snatched a few hours' sleep, but Mr. Fraser paces up and down, leaning on Edward's arm, whom he seems to cling to in consequence of his youth and similarity of disposition with his dear son. At last the sun rises, and the eagerness with which the father gazes down the abyss is indeed pitiable. Yes, Ralph is still there, but not now so happily unconscious. His eyes are wide open and fixed, and he seems to fully realize the horror of his position. As soon as he catches sight of his father he waves his arm, and cries in a shrill weak voice for the first time, " Father, father ! *when* are they coming to save me ? " With a heart-broken groan the miserable father flings himself on the ground, and it falls to Edward's lot to answer this appeal.

With his voice broken and trembling with emotion he calls to the boy, and tells him that as yet they have not been able to reach him, and that the only chance is for some one to be lowered from above, and to be swung backwards and forwards till he reaches him, when, if he is very quick and steady, a good spring might enable the rescuer to catch him and bring him up in his arms. It is a desperate plan, but no one can suggest a better, so they all cross again and Edward has a strong double rope knotted under his arms, and taking his friend aside, gives him a few quiet messages in case he should not return, for he knows well it is but a forlorn hope, though the sight of the father's agony has prompted him to risk this one more chance. The rope is slowly paid out, and Edward slides down the face of the rock with a long staff in his hand to guide himself with. Lower, lower, till he is over the edge and hanging sheer out. He shouts a few directions and he is still lowered till he is parallel with poor Ralph, who looks at him with the wild, anxious eyes of a hunted creature, yet dare not leave his hold. Edward finds his staff is too short to reach the rock to give himself the desired momentum, so another is lowered to him with which he can just reach it. He gives a push and feels himself swing—to and fro—to and fro—each time getting a few inches nearer, while Ralph watches in agonized expectation. Ah! the swing is too short, he cannot get within six feet. He speaks kindly and encouragingly to the boy, and tells him to try and stand up, and when he is at his nearest to jump to him. It is a fearful risk, but the only chance. Ralph cautiously stretches one numbed limb and then the other, and still clutching his tree endeavours to straighten himself, but sinks down with a cry of pain. His ankle is dislocated. Just at this moment Edward hears a shout from above and he is hauled rapidly up without being able to stop them. He reaches the top and finds that he was only just in time, for the ropes had all but parted. The sharp rocks cut almost like knives. There is no need to picture the father's despair when he gives his sad intelligence. Now all hope is indeed over, and they can only return to the opposite side and wait—for what? However, another attempt is made to convey some food and wine in a little basket, but the boy has again sunk into a species of stupor and cannot be roused. The second day passes—the night comes on. Mr. Fraser, worn out with watching, is prevailed upon to take some food and sinks

into a heavy sleep. The third day arrives. The sun has scarcely lit up the horizon when the careworn watchers are roused by an ominous sound. Whish-whirr comes through the air, and hovering above their heads appear three huge vultures, whose brilliant keen eyes are anxiously scanning the sides of the gorge. With a shout of disgust Manning seized his rifle, but the wary birds would not approach near enough for a shot, but hung aloft in the clear sky poised on their large wings, and evidently quite aware they had only to wait.

The sound of Manning's shout awoke Mr. Fraser, who came to the door of the tent with a faint gleam of hope lighting his hollow eye, which soon, however, changed into his old look of blank despair when he saw the cause.

Suddenly he seemed to take a resolution, and stepped back into the tent, from whence he issued with his rifle loaded and cocked. He took three steps to the edge of the chasm, knelt for an instant with his eyes closed, then raised his rifle to his shoulder, aimed—not up—but *down*. . . . A sharp report echoed among the rocks. He had shot his son through the heart!

A. W. F.

After All !

I *think* that he loved me ! at least, he said
That the world could never be just the same,
After the ashes lay cold and dead,
 The ashes of love that were once a flame.
He said that always about my name,
 Was the sweet, sad sigh of an old regret !
That life could never be quite the same,
 Or quite as glad as of old—but yet—
I know that somewhere he lives—ah, me !
 Somewhere without me—beyond recall !
The old, sweet bondage has left him free—

After all !

I *know* that I loved him ! at least, I know,
 That when the ashes were grey and dead,
I felt the flame of the long ago
 Brighten my life to a fiery red.
He was not worthy ! Ah, so they said !
 Not worthy even an hour's regret !
So I told them the sweet, old love was dead—
 Buried like other old loves—but yet—
Could the waters of Lethe flow—ah, me !
 And cover the past beyond recall,
I know I could never again be free—

After all !

G. BUTT,
Kasauli, Aug. 13th.

A Buried Sin.

CHAPTER V.

FROM POETRY TO PROSE.

FOR the next few days the young people had things much their own way ; Mrs. Thurlowe, having administered her rebuke, left it to ferment in their minds and produce the leaven of regret for past offences and respect for future proprieties. She subsided into her usual taciturnity and retirement ; and, provided that they appeared at table at the proper time, she took no further heed of them. Neither Dorothy nor Claire would wilfully have crossed their grandmother's desires nor acted against her wishes, but in some slight degree this could not be helped under the present circumstances.

Reginald Kent had not presented himself since that first visit when, finding Ruth absent, The Friars had lost its chief attraction for him ; however, it was quite natural that his brother or George D'Alton should call with inquiries, or drop in, as Mr. D'Alton at least had been accustomed to do, to afternoon tea ; they could not possibly "shut the door in his face," as Dolly tersely though not elegantly put it. Then if they met—by chance, of course—in their ramble by the shore, they naturally joined forces in search for sea anemones or geological specimens ; or if they encountered in their saunter through the woods, the sweet meadows, or the cornfields with their rich growth of waving grain, it was equally natural that they should walk and talk together ; and if they extended this delightful wandering till the twilight closed in, the girls discreetly dismissed their escort at the gate, so that dear Grannie should not be troubled with imaginary worries.

The fact is, the young folk had a great deal to say to one another ; they had seldom found an opportunity for such pleasant and undisturbed *sête-a-têtes*, the chaperone difficulty had always been a stumbling-block in their way ; but now they had plenty of time to settle the business of their hearts' devotion, and get their guns into position ready for action on Mrs. Blaine's

return from Knaresborough, when a double set of lovers threatened to claim her immediate attention.

"I don't think your mother will be much surprised," said Mr. D'Alton, addressing Dolly in a tone of happy consciousness ; "she must have seen our attachment all along."

"Our attachment!" repeated Dolly with a little *moue*. "I don't think I've said anything about being attached at all, and certainly I should never under any circumstances hoist Cupid's banner, or go in for school-girl sentiment, or do anything so ridiculous as to attract anybody's attention to—the state of my digestion."

"Now, Dolly darling, don't be quarrelsome," he said. "You know that I mean—*my* devotion."

"Ah! that is quite a different matter," exclaimed Dorothy. "I don't think I've any particular objection to people suspecting *that*!"

"Perhaps Mrs. Blaine will not think me good enough for you," suggested Mr. D'Alton, seized with momentary depression ; "and talking of that, I shouldn't blame her—nobody would be."

"Now that's modest," said Dorothy. "I am glad you see what a valuable person I am, and I do like humility in a man, one so seldom finds it ; but perhaps when you know me better you'll not think quite so much of me."

"I never want to know you better," he began.

"What a rude thing to say," she exclaimed ; "but really you don't know me at all—only the colour of my hair and eyes, the sound of my voice, and outside appearance generally—and appearances are often deceitful."

"I'm satisfied," he answered, looking on the girl's happy face with all the love-light shining in his eyes. "I am willing to take all your outward attractions, and give you credit for all invisible virtues ; they'll come out some day as 'shining lights on life's highway.'

"That all sounds very nice, but you only see the best of me now—wait till I turn round and you see the worst."

"There will never be a worst for me, Dolly darling ; I shall never see anything but what is lovely and lovable about you ; but as you are only human," he added apologetically, "I dare-say you may have some little faults hidden away somewhere, though I shall never find them—shouldn't see them if I did."

"No! well, that will be very right," she said gravely. "I've heard sensible people say that a husband should always have one eye shut and it doesn't matter if he can't see much with the other. You know, George, sometimes we quarrel now, and if we are always together I daresay we shall quarrel a great deal more."

"Well, then, we shall make it up a great deal more; so that won't matter," he answered stoutly. "If we can only get your mother's consent I shall not care how the world goes. Doesn't it seem strange, Dolly," and he laughed heartily as though it was the biggest joke out, "to think that you and I in three months' time may be walking about as Mr. and Mrs. D'Alton?"

"Now you put it that way, it seems too strange ever to be true!" exclaimed Dolly; "and I don't believe I should ever make up my mind to it—it seems such a serious thing to swear to love one person all one's life."

"I don't mind," replied Mr. D'Alton, "so that that 'one person' is you."

"But you know it won't always be *me*," observed Dolly. "We change every bit of us every seven years, so in seven years there won't be a bit of *me*, the original Dolly, left."

"Then," he answered merrily, "having once begun I shall not be able to stop. I shall go on loving that other person just the same."

"But in twenty years I may have been half a dozen different persons and you will have been a Mormon—a real live Mormon without knowing it."

So they strolled along the lovely green lanes on the bright summer day, the sunlight of their own souls mocking the sunlight without—as happy and as heedless as the birds that twittered and sang above their heads—interspersing their merry talk with as many affectionate demonstrations as it was prudent to exchange on the queen's highway, when prying eyes might peep from the leafy boughs, or familiar figures flit round unexpected corners, or even look down from a balloon, unlicensed witnesses to the overflow of their affections.

They were neither of them disposed to take a serious view of life, and in their future calculations took only *love* into account—ignoring the fact that love can't feed upon itself, but must be built up on butchers' and bakers' supplies and sundry other equally commonplace and equally necessary foundations. If this

foundation is rotten the whole love structure speedily falls into ruins, and "all the king's horses and all the king's men" could not build it up again ; but they were both desperately in love ; so far, love was the be-all and end-all of their existence ; they were both young—she nineteen, he twenty-three—and of the grave responsibilities and sterner business of life they held not a thought between them—as yet. So far she had not a crumple among her rose leaves, and he—well, he had been occasionally afflicted with a *mauvais quart d'heure* when his creditors became troublesome, but he staved one off, gave a tit-bit to another, a promise to a third, and then went on, as is the way with some men, in a happy-go-lucky kind of way, looking neither backward nor forward.

He was a young soldier with small means and extravagant tastes. He was forced to associate, in daily life, with young fellows richer and more reckless than himself ; hence came the temptation to run his life on the same line as theirs, and he naturally got crippled in the attempt. If a man will put his son in the army without the means of maintaining him there on a level with his companions, there is always some such unfortunate result. A young fellow, in the flush and pride of early manhood, will not grovel while his companions soar, nor drink water while they are jovial over their wine, nor refuse an oar because he can't pay his share of the boat. The position is a most spirit-crushing and trying one, which a high-spirited young fellow finds it hard to bear. Of course, every man ought to have the courage and be strong enough to stand his own ground and live on his own means—but in nine cases out of ten he doesn't. He tries to keep afloat with his companions, and generally goes under.

As for Mr. D'Alton, his difficulties had troubled him sometimes, but since he had known Dorothy he had thrown the thought of his liabilities aside like so much thistledown, trusting for his delivery to chance, to luck, to anything—but himself. "How to live on nothing a year paid quarterly" was the problem these foolish, happy young people expected Mrs. Blaine to solve satisfactorily on her return. Meanwhile they had outstripped their companions a long way ; indeed they had never given them a thought—they were just thinking of returning homeward that they might be in time to pour out the grand-

mother's tea, when the station fly came lumbering along the road ; they stepped aside to escape being run over.

"Did you see who that was ?" exclaimed Mr. D'Alton.

"No, I wasn't looking. Why ?"

"I think, I am almost sure, it was Mrs. Blaine."

"And Ruth ?"

"No, there was nobody with her—and she looked very sad and very thoughtful."

"Do you think she saw us ?" exclaimed Dorothy eagerly. "You—you had your arm round my waist, sir, and I told you not to do it." Mr. D'Alton did not seem at all repentant ; on the contrary, he seemed inclined to do it again, or worse.

"It does not matter," he said confidently ; "I shall see her to-morrow, then it will be all plain sailing." They hurried home-ward, and on reaching The Friars, Dorothy, as usual, bade him good-bye at the gate ; Claire was still lingering by the way. Dorothy learned that her mother had returned, and hurried up-stairs to give her a loving hug of welcome.

"Darling mother," she exclaimed, "I am so glad you have come home. We have been so dull without you." Mrs. Blaine returned her caress affectionately but with a certain degree of reserve.

"Well, my dear," she answered, "you seem to have done the best to enliven yourselves, judging from what I saw on the road." And there came a slight shade over her usually pleasant face. "I was a little surprised, Dolly, to find you wandering about in Mr. D'Alton's company, alone too, when *I* was away from home."

"We were not alone, mamma ; Claire and Mr. Algernon Kent were with us."

"But loitering half a mile behind you," replied Mrs. Blaine. "I should have stopped the fly and brought you home ; but I did not wish to put either you or Mr. D'Alton in a humiliating position. I'm ashamed of you, Dolly ; you would not have been tearing about the country in that fashion if I had been at home."

"We weren't tearing about the country, mamma," answered Dolly, resenting the expression ; "and if you had been at home we should not have had the same temptation." Then she added in her old saucy way, "Opportunity makes the thief, you know, and—" she threw all reserve to the winds—"he loves me, mamma ;

we love one another with all our hearts, and—he's coming to-morrow to tell you so."

"So far as that!" exclaimed Mrs. Blaine, elevating her brows in some surprise. "You have verified the old saying, 'Make hay while the sun shines.'"

"The hay has been making itself for a long time past—and you'll be very kind to him, mamma, won't you?" she added, hiding her rose-flushed face upon her mother's breast.

"Kind, my dear Dorothy, of course I shall be kind," answered her mother; "but if you could persuade him to leave this tale untold you would be kinder still, for it is impossible that anything serious can come of it."

"Why impossible, mamma? I thought you liked George D'Alton? He always seemed to be a special favourite of yours," said Dolly in surprised tones.

"So he is, my dear, and I do like him," replied Mrs. Blaine; "but to like a man as a pleasant chatty companion on the tennis lawn or at the tea-table, and to like him as your daughter's husband, are very different matters. No, Dolly, it is all quite out of the question—it is best that should be at once understood. For one thing he is too young——"

"He can feel quite as much as though he were a hundred," said Dolly, her spirits falling below zero; "and we think so much of one another—he has given me all his heart."

"It will be of no use to you, my dear child. He might as well give you his head!" said Mrs. Blaine. "Look at things reasonably, Dolly, and let us settle the matter ~~once~~ for all. In the first place, Mr. D'Alton has no position, and neither brains nor ability to make one—he is a nice gentlemanly, pleasant-mannered young fellow, I admit; but that is not enough——"

"But does love count for nothing, mamma?" ventured Dolly.

"Not much, my dear," replied her mother; "it is all very well in its way as a sort of side-dish, but it must be supplemented by other substantial good things. Now Mr. D'Alton has the tastes of a rich man with the resources of a very poor one. He has only his pay to live on—yet he smokes cigars at a shilling apiece, drinks champagne when he can only afford small beer, and tries to cover the skies with a twelve-foot canvas. No, Dolly, he is

recklessly extravagant—and—well; dear, run away; let him come to me to-morrow and I will talk to *him*; I daresay I shall bring him to see things in a reasonable light."

"But, mamma," began Dorothy.

"But, my dear child," replied her mother, interrupting her with a deprecating gesture, "there is so much serious business on hand I really ought not to be troubled with trifles. There, run away, that's a good girl. I must go and have a talk with granny at once; and, by-the-bye, when Claire comes in send her upstairs, and come yourself too—if you like; it will save the twice telling of one tale."

How close together lie the fountains of joy and sorrow!—the draught of the one is too soon embittered by the taste of the other. Dorothy remained standing exactly where her mother had left her—feeling very sorrowful and empty-hearted and dizzy, as though she had fallen from a height and was now grovelling on the ground. Her love—a girlish fancy her mother would have called it—for this gay young soldier had struck deep into her usually frivolous nature, and possessed it wholly. For weeks, nay months past, the thought of him had been with her from sunrise till sunset, and in all her girlish visions of coming years, in all her air-built castles on the distant plains, he was the central figure and occupied the foreground; all else was dwarfed beside him. For a few brief hours they had revelled in a dream of mutually confessed affection—but now after that one glimpse of paradise the gates seemed to have closed against her; and poverty, like a flaming sword, flashed forth the warning, "You must not enter here."

However a grain of hope forced its way to the front. She had great faith in her dear George's powers of eloquence, and trusted he would find something to say, some project to bring forward, that would place a new aspect on the face of affairs, which would induce her mother to change her opinion, and overthrow what at present seemed to be an insuperable objection to any engagement between them. Her mother's prosaic suggestions she regarded with lofty disdain. At the present moment common sense or prudence could not enter into Dorothy's calculations; she could only see things in a rosy love-light, and was supremely indifferent to butchers' or bakers' bills, and all such matter-of-fact considerations. Meanwhile Mrs.

Blaine went up to her mother's room ; there was much to tell, much to discuss.

"I thought it best to remain till after the funeral," said Mrs. Blaine, "to hear the will read and see how the land lay all round. Uncle Regy has left his affairs in perfect order ; things are exactly as we thought. Of course Harold takes the title and landed estates—except those parts which are not entailed ; but uncle has disposed of his personal effects and the property over which he holds control rather oddly, *I* think. Naturally there are legacies to all the old servants, and he has left that little freehold just outside the gates of Knaresborough—you remember, the pretty house that Mr. Levison has occupied for so many years?—well, he has left it to Mr. Levison and his heirs, male or female, for ever. He has left Dolly a thousand pounds, but he does not mention either *me* or *you*! I suppose I resented dear Harold's wrongs too strongly—and of course he knows that you have never forgiven him. But the thing that astonishes me most of all," she continued in a voice of puzzled indignation, "he has left five thousand pounds to some unknown woman named Elizabeth Hollingsworth, or her heirs, and commands that no expense be spared in the endeavour to discover their whereabouts, he having lost sight of them for many years. Fancy bequeathing five thousand to a strange woman and only one thousand to Dolly, his own flesh and blood!" The elder lady let her hands fall into her lap.

"Elizabeth Hollingsworth," she repeated thoughtfully. "I have a dim sort of recollection that I have heard the name before."

"I believe that sly Levison could tell us something about it if he liked ; for if anybody was in Uncle Regy's confidence he was. I don't think Harold will care to have Mr. Levison settled down before his gates."

"No—he will naturally object. Mr. Levison is too closely connected with the unfortunate past for his presence to be anything but an embarrassment—indeed a living reproach ; although I believe the poor old man always deeply regrets the part his duty compelled him to take ; and *I* at least have never resented our sufferings upon *him*! Still when a man has sinned and suffered as my poor boy has done, he might at least be allowed to forget—if he can."

"Poor Harold!" exclaimed Mrs. Blaine with moistening eyes.

"Mark my words, mother, the day will come when the truth will be known."

"It *is* known, to our sorrow," interrupted the elder lady.

"Yes, known according to *law*, not according to *right*," said Mrs. Blaine ; "but it will be seen clearly one day that Harold has been in some way sacrificed. I should not wonder if all this time he has been paying the penalty for another's crime."

"If only it might be proved so," said the old lady mournfully, shaking her head, "then I should die in peace. But no, no, Anna, it is your dream—only your dream!"

"It was a piece of fiendish malice on Uncle Regy's part to carry his resentment beyond the grave," said Mrs. Blaine. "He could not prevent Harold having the property, which is his natural inheritance; but he has done his best to embitter the possession of it. I can quite understand his desire to show his regard for Mr. Levison, who he believes has served him faithfully for so many years (though I have my private opinion about it—but that's neither here nor there), but he might have shown it in some other way. As I said before, it was a piece of fiendish malice to place my brother's enemy at his own gates."

"Perhaps Mr. Levison will have the good feeling to let the property. I should not think it would be pleasant to his feelings to remain there; but then he is an old man now, and it has been his home for so many years, he seems to have become rooted to the soil; it would be hard for him to tear himself away. Besides, where could he go?"

"That's his business; but I should say anywhere away from Knaresborough," said Mrs. Blaine. "I never thought too well of Mr. Levison, and if he stays I shall think no better of him now."

"You were always prejudiced, Anna."

"You too, mother—but in the wrong direction; but that's an old question, and has been exhausted long ago."

"Well, Anna, I do hope you will disguise your feelings so far as to treat Mr. Levison with proper politeness. He is coming down in a few days to bring Ruth home, and I have written to invite him to stay on a little visit."

"Of course I should not allow my individual feelings to operate against my duty as hostess; only it is no harm for me to say in strict privacy that I wish our dear Ruth had some other father."

CHAPTER VI.

MRS. BLAINE'S VIEWS.

IN the dusk of the evening, the first of her arrival home, Mrs. Blaine discussed family matters in full conclave ; the two girls for the first time being present as she spoke freely of the changed position of affairs—only keeping the one fact of the great family sorrow hidden, as she hoped to keep it for ever hidden, from Claire. Of course Claire knew well enough that her wandering father, so little known, so lovingly remembered, must be the heir to the title and estates of his uncle, the late Sir Reginald Thurlowe, but had never thought much of the matter, and since the crisis had come the fact had for the time escaped her memory. Her heart had indeed been too full of other things, and she had never thought at all of the change in her father's, and consequently in her own, position. Now that it was brought to her mind, associated with the idea of her father's return, her heart bounded and her face glowed with delight, not for the wealth or title's sake, but at the thought of seeing him again.

"Oh ! auntie," she exclaimed, "it seems almost too good to be true—to think that my father, my dear father, is really coming home at last. When will he be here ? I'm so impatient—can't we go and meet him at Liverpool ? I have been longing for him so long that now I shall hardly be able to wait till he comes. When is the very earliest time that we can see him, auntie ?"

"Well, I can't quite tell you that," replied Mrs. Blaine ; "but Mr. Watson has written to him ; and if he starts immediately he gets the letter he can't possibly be here for six weeks at the earliest. But think of the change in your position, Claire ; you will be quite a little heiress now."

"A fig for position," exclaimed the girl ; "I only want papa. If he were to return in rags and tatters, without a penny in the world, I should not care, so that only he comes back to me."

"I think you can scarcely remember him, Claire," said Dorothy ; "you were such a little thing when he went away."

"I should know him—I'm sure I should know him among a thousand," replied Claire ; "it all comes back to me now. I remember his face ; for a long time it has been fading into an indistinct memory, but now I see him as plainly as when he

kissed me good-bye so long, long ago. I can almost hear his voice and remember what he said," she added, with corrugated brows and eyes half closed, as though she was searching back into some far-away memory. "Yes, we were in some dismal sort of place. I went down a long passage. He took me in his arms and said, 'Good-bye, darling; don't forget your poor father; never believe anything but that he loved you, and that the world is cruel and unjust. Child, will you remember? you are so young.' That is exactly what he said; he put my hair back, and looked into my eyes sorrowfully, oh, so sorrowfully. Why did he go, auntie, if he wanted to stay?"

"Want of money—poverty drives many a man to seek his fortune in distant countries, Claire, and your father was always very fond of travelling."

"Poverty would never drive me to leave those I love," said Claire; "but never mind all that now. I am sure papa did all for the best, and nothing matters now that he is coming home—but aunt, granny, you don't seem so glad as you ought to be. You are silent, and you look sad. You don't think—ah! surely nothing can prevent his coming now? If he went away to seek his fortune, now he has it waiting for him at home he will come back. It is not that you are afraid something will prevent his coming?"

"We *hope* nothing will prevent it, dear," replied Mrs. Blaine, "but nothing is *certain*. We cannot count upon anything until it has really happened, and I wouldn't have you too sanguine, Claire, because if anything should prevent or delay his coming, your disappointment will be doubly bitter. Hope for the best, dear child, but always prepare for the worst."

"I can't help expecting," replied Claire, "although I have only been hoping about five minutes, I feel as though I had been hoping and expecting all my life, and so I believe I have, only I didn't know it. I *won't* think of disappointment, aunt; it would be too dreadful. You don't know of any reason why he should not come?" and there was a suspicious note of interrogation in her voice.

"No, I know of none," replied Mrs. Blaine; "but then, Claire, there is the chapter of accidents to be considered."

"People often make themselves miserable thinking and preparing for things that never happen," rejoined Claire. "I don't

mean to do that! However much we prepare for disappointment we feel it quite as much when it comes as though we hadn't prepared for it at all."

"Mamma, I know now why you gave us *carte blanche* about our mourning," broke in Dorothy, who had listened attentively to all that was going on. "I suppose Uncle Harold will be a rich man, and—has Uncle Regy left us anything, mamma?"

"He has left *you* a legacy," replied her mother, "but nothing to any of the rest of us, and you will not come into possession of yours until you are twenty-one."

"Nothing to Claire?"

"Claire will not need anything. She will be well provided for, being Harold's only child."

"Ah!" said Claire, half to herself with a little fluttering sigh, "then perhaps he mayn't have to go to Austria after all."

"What is that about going to Austria?" asked Mrs. Blaine, whose sharp ears had caught the low-uttered words.

"He will be here presently, auntie, and explain matters for himself," replied Claire blushing, and her happy face suggested the story.

"*He!* Mercy upon me!" exclaimed Mrs. Blaine. "Am I to have *two* pairs of lovers on my hands to-day? I have been so happy, and hoped my two girls were content, for all these years. I had quite forgotten that such things as lovers existed; now it seems as though a moral earthquake was upheaving on all sides of us."

Mrs. Blaine was, however, very well prepared for the earthquake, and received the first shock the next morning early, for they had scarcely finished breakfast when Mr. D'Alton arrived. Dorothy saw him coming towards the house, and, as her mother rose to leave the room, said softly:

"Be kind to him, mamma, and be sure I see him before he leaves."

"Of course, Dolly, you don't suppose I am going to act the tyrant," replied Mrs. Blaine, "though I am sure Mr. D'Alton will recognize and be amenable to common sense, when it is once placed before him."

"You'll have to turn on strong side-lights if you mean him to see it in your fashion," replied Dolly. For a second she laid a detaining hand upon her mother's arm, adding, "You can talk

over things as sensibly as you like, mamma, but don't decide—nothing can be decided without *me*, for after all is said and done it is *my funeral*, you know."

"For goodness' sake, Dolly, don't use that vulgar American slang," said Mrs. Blaine impatiently. There was something belligerent in Dorothy's tone that did not please her. She was not so submissive as she had seemed the night before; in fact, she had lain awake tossing on her bed, and, as Mrs. Blaine would say, looking things plainly in the face, and had come to a decision that what would be most agreeable to herself would by all means, and in all ways, be the most desirable course for everybody—if they could only be got to see it. As the door closed on Mrs. Blaine the two girls plunged into a discussion on their mutual affairs and the probabilities as to their coming to a satisfactory arrangement.

"If anything happens to part me from George," exclaimed Dorothy impulsively, "I shall never be happy again—never. I see by your looks you don't believe me, Claire; you think because I'm naturally gay and light-hearted that I have no feeling."

"On the contrary, Dolly, I think you have a great deal of feeling, too much indeed, only it doesn't last—it blazes, flickers, and goes out. Why, how many fancies have you had during the last year?"

"Fancies. Oh! I don't take any account of fancies, but this is a really serious affair," replied Dolly. "I own I have *frivolled* a great deal, but it is like the moth and the candle: we who flutter around get more seriously burnt at last."

"Well, cheer up—don't be down-hearted," said Claire; "the course of true love never does run smooth, they say, and I do hope things will turn out all right for you at last."

"*Your* course promises to run smooth enough—everything looks bright ahead for you—every wish you have seems likely to be gratified. There's Uncle Harold at last coming home; there's wealth, position, love, everything for *you*—not but what I'm glad, very glad for your sake, Claire, only I feel like being left out in the cold—as though we were coming to cross roads where you and I must part company—*you* to be happy and I to be miserable."

"Don't talk nonsense," replied Claire; "we have been like sisters all our lives, and whatever happens we shall be like sisters

still. If things fall out well for me, they will be well for you too—and as for being miserable, why, you were not miserable yesterday, and why should you be miserable to-morrow?"

"Because yesterday I didn't know; to-day I do," answered Dolly with a little sigh. "I hoped mamma would be glad because I was glad; and now she is going on about *money*, as if £ s. d. were the only letters in the alphabet! Hark! that was the library door shutting, and mamma's coming this way. Oh! Claire, feel my hand, how it trembles!"

"Come into the library for a moment, will you, Dolly?" exclaimed Mrs. Blaine, glancing into the room quite cheerfully; and Dolly followed her into the library, where Mr. D'Alton stood staring out at the window in evidently not too jubilant a frame of mind.

"We have been having quite a nice pleasant talk," said Mrs. Blaine, smiling from one to the other; "and Mr. D'Alton has the good sense to see things in a reasonable light, and agrees with me that under existing circumstances any engagement between you is not to be thought of. It is simply impossible."

Dolly said nothing, but looked reproachfully in her lover's face. He looked uneasily from mother to daughter, evidently shivering under the maternal gaze, but he answered firmly:

"I don't exactly agree to that, Mrs. Blaine," and passing quickly to Dolly's side he put his arm round her and drew her to him in spite of that stony glare of disapproving eyes. "It is just this, Dolly darling: your mother has been pounding me with the money question till my brain seems beaten to a pulp. She says, and I dare say it is true, that we can't live without money."

"But some people live on very little," said Dolly shyly.

"Mr. D'Alton admits that he has nothing but his pay," rejoined Mrs. Blaine, coming down with sledge-hammer straightforwardness to the point; "he admits that he can't live on that by himself, and what is not enough for one, by no arithmetic calculation can be stretched into enough for two."

"What a horrid nuisance money is!" exclaimed Dorothy ruefully.

"The want of it is a greater," rejoined Mrs. Blaine; "you are both inclined to take a too sentimental view of matters; I have an older head upon my shoulders, and have got to think for you both. I am sorry I cannot pose myself in a more amiable light,

but I must repeat, Mr. D'Alton, that I think it is a pity you did not take a little more time for reflection before you came forward with this proposal—or indeed before you sought my daughter at all."

"There was no seeking about it, mamma," replied Dolly; we came together quite naturally—because we couldn't help it."

"And when a fellow feels as bad about a thing as I do, he doesn't think of going into cold-blooded calculations about money matters," rejoined Mr. D'Alton in a rather injured tone.

"Yet somebody must go into those 'cold-blooded calculations,'" said Mrs. Blaine in an aggravatingly cheerful and reasonable way. "But I thought we had agreed about the inexpediency, indeed impossibility, of things going any further? It is better to cut the thread at once, than get it knotted into an inextricable tangle. Believe me," she added, laying her hand kindly on his arm, for the blank faces of the young people touched her; she had not forgotten one such equally bitter hour of her own youth, "I sympathize with you both; but it is not wise to deal gingerly with these matters—the firmer we grasp the nettle the less it hurts. This is a trying time for you, I know, but I am advising you for the best; you will see that some day, if you do not see it now. Love, however desperate it is, cannot live on air; it would become a ragged scarecrow in a month! Remember," she added more seriously, "I don't speak in ignorance. I've seen the romance of love in a cottage played out; and a melancholy spectacle it is. You see, Dolly dear, I only want things to end for the *present*. The day may come; something may happen to bring you together again."

"Yes, something may happen," returned Mr. D'Alton. "I may tumble upon some Tom Tidler's ground and pick up gold and silver." Then he added with sudden animation, "There is one thing which perhaps you don't know of, Mrs. Blaine; I've got a rich cousin, and I'm his next of kin: if he dies everything he has got will come to me."

"I know," said Mrs. Blaine; "but, you foolish fellow, your cousin is a bachelor in the prime of life, and a hundred things may happen to prevent your ever seeing a penny of his money. Besides, it is ill waiting for dead men's shoes, so put that idea out

of your mind at once. Now I really think we have said all that need be said ; words cannot alter circumstances, and I hope I have convinced you of the utter folly and imprudence of entering into any engagement at present—mind I only say at present," she added in a conciliatory tone ; "we don't know what may happen by and by."

"If we were once engaged," hazarded Mr. D'Alton, "we should not mind how long we waited—should we, Dolly?"

"I should mind very much," interrupted Mrs. Blaine quickly ; "that waiting is dreary work, and no man who really cared for a girl would wish her to spend the best years of her life waiting for a time that perhaps never comes." She looked at him severely. He turned his head guiltily away, and searched in Dolly's face for sympathy.

"At least, Mrs. Blaine," he said, "you will not be so unkind as to part us altogether. I join my regiment in a few days, and I suppose Dolly and I may meet as usual until then ?"

"It would be wiser if you were to leave at once," said Mrs. Blaine ; "but let that be as you please. You can come and go like the rest of the world ; but there must be no solitary rambles, no moonlight meandering. On mere friendly terms we shall be happy to see you." She dropped the conversation, and said politely, as she made a move to show that the interview was ended, "Will you stay to luncheon ?"

"Thanks, I think not, Mrs. Blaine," he replied, seeing he was not expected to accept ; "this sort of conversation rather takes away a fellow's appetite."

"Shall you be able to stay for the Kent House festivities ?" said Mrs. Blaine with amiable complaisance ; "you have not forgotten that Mr. Kent gives all his people an entertainment on Saturday, and we have all promised to lend a helping hand in amusing them."

Mr. D'Alton was in no mood for drifting into common-place conversation. He took his leave. Dolly walked with him across the lawn, and they stood a long time at the gate. "Good-bye," or rather *au revoir*, took a great deal of saying.

When at last Dolly returned to the house, Mrs. Blaine said rather suspiciously :

"I hope you have not been making any foolish promises, Dolly ?"

"There is no need for promises, mamma—whatever happens, we shall never either of us think of anybody else!"

"Humph!" said Mrs. Blaine with compassionate tolerance, "we shall see!"

CHAPTER VII.

MOTHER AND SONS.

EVERYTHING looked bright and promising for Claire and Algernon Kent. Mrs. Blaine had been graciously cordial during their brief interview, and was disposed to allow them to keep to their present tacit understanding (possibly she knew she could not prevent that), though of course it was not in her power to sanction any more decided arrangement—there must be no open engagement at present. Claire's father, who had been for many years absent from England, was expected shortly to return, and it would be for him to consider and decide upon this serious matter, in which his daughter's future happiness was involved. She made no allusion to the painful circumstances surrounding Harold Thurlowe's absence. She still hoped it would be possible to conceal them from Claire, especially if Algernon Kent carried out his present views of accepting the engineering business in Austria, which opened up a promising career to him, and would keep him and Claire abroad for some years, supposing that they gained Harold Thurlowe's consent and married this year. She did not think that Claire, with her romantic ideas of filial devotion, would marry without Harold's sanction. Claire had not the slightest doubt of her father's consent. What possible objection could the most exacting father have to Algernon Kent? He was handsome, energetic, honourable, and, with his intellect and industry, in the way to make for himself both fame and fortune. In her eyes he combined all the attractive and sterling qualities that go to make a man as perfect as man can be; and this pair of lovers were happy and contented, buoyant and rejoicing in the present, and looking forward confidently to the future. The one drawback to Claire's perfect bliss was the fact that Dolly's prospects were less bright than her own.

The two girls confided open-heartedly in one another; they

talked over their affairs with mutually sympathetic interest, and in spite of the uncertainty of her own position, Dolly took a vicarious pleasure in Claire's romance, which promised such a fair reality, though she could not help occasionally referring to her own cloudy prospects.

"It seems hard, doesn't it, Claire," she said, "that the want of a little money should have the power to make one miserable?"

"Not to make one miserable, Dolly dear," she answered, "only to prevent our being *quite* happy; and when we come to think of it the want of money may be made right any day, but there are some things the having or the wanting of which can never be made right. It seems to me that the mere fact of knowing that you love one another is happiness enough for the present. Think, Dolly dear, of the many things that *might* have been so much worse than the things that *are*."

"That's true enough, Claire," she answered, "but you know I never had your philosophical spirit; and after all, when we are suffering from things that *are* we don't trouble ourselves with what might have been. But you don't understand, dear, as indeed how should you, when you have everything so smooth and fair before you! You are a lucky girl, Claire; everything has come to you at once."

"Not quite come, but coming, I hope," replied Claire with a happy, hopeful smile. "Sometimes I feel so happy the house seems hardly large enough to hold me. I feel as though I could soar out of myself and fly! It can't last, this happiness of mine! I am afraid sometimes, afraid that something will happen to snatch the cup from my lips before I have time to drain it. Those lines keep throbbing in my head:

"We are not sure of sorrow, and joy was never sure;
To-day may die to-morrow—time stoops to no man's lure."

And I dread lest my day should die before I have lived it through, before the happy to-morrow comes."

"If I were in your place," exclaimed Dolly, "I shouldn't let any such thoughts worry me. I'd drink up my cup to-day and not bother about to-morrow! If I had my George as you have your Algy, to-morrow would have no terrors for me."

Meanwhile the events that were, and those that were expected to come, created some interest and discussion at Kent House.

As Mrs. Kent rarely went out or appeared at any social gatherings—tea-parties or picnics knew her not—she depended on her sons for all information concerning her neighbours ; and though she was not specially interested in anybody's affairs, a little gossip amused her, and they duly brought her the “latest intelligence” from The Friars.

It was only about a week since Reginald had expressed his intention of speaking to Ruth Levison, but, as she had been away with Mrs. Blaine, he had had no opportunity of doing so ; therefore he had nothing on that subject to tell his mother ; and, finding that he made no further allusion to it, she hoped the matter had fallen through. Though she said nothing, she thought a great deal about it ; it was one of those things that lay nearest to her heart, but furthest from her lips.

Mrs. Kent was not a woman to sympathize with love or sentiment, or anything in the way of marrying or approaching the marrying stage—any allusion to such heart-stirring matters seemed to jar upon her feelings ; therefore it was no wonder that at the present state of affairs her younger son did not take her in his confidence respecting Claire Thurlowe. He thought he would wait till all was settled and Sir Harold Thurlowe's consent obtained ; it would then be quite time enough to broach a subject which he knew might be distasteful to her ; but they talked freely and had plenty to say upon the unexpected death of Sir Reginald Thurlowe, and the change thereby effected in the fortunes of the Blaine family. Mrs. Kent was eager for every detail concerning the deceased baronet. The subject interested, nay, agitated her ; she questioned them on the most trivial point, indeed made more curious inquiries than they were able to answer. The curiosity of one who was usually so indifferent to other people's affairs attracted the attention of her sons.

“Why, mother,” exclaimed Reginald, in open-eyed wonder, “how interested you are about this old Sir Reginald Thurlowe ! and yet we never even heard his name till a few days ago. As a rule you're not much interested in the people you do know, and not at all in the people you don't.”

“Perhaps you knew something of him in some old dead-and-gone days, mother ? ” hazarded her younger son, who had a keener eye for observation than his matter-of-fact brother, who

never saw farther than the end of his own nose, and not always that. Algernon noticed that his mother seemed much disturbed, and his attention was more attracted by her manner than her words, especially when she answered brusquely :

"Yes, I knew something of him—a hundred years ago—but I did not know how closely he was connected with these Blaines until—lately."

"And you don't know how much *we* are interested in the Blaine family, does she, old boy?" exclaimed Reginald indiscreetly, slapping his brother on the back and winking violently. "When Claire's father comes home we'll let her into all our secrets."

"Who is Claire? and what has her father to do with the matter?" inquired Mrs. Kent with puckered brows.

"Ah! I forgot," answered Reginald, "you don't know, as I've always called the two girls 'Miss Dolly' and 'Miss Claire.' I really didn't know myself at first that they had different names till lately.. The one is a niece, 'Claire Thurlowe,' the daughter of Harold Thurlowe, the new baronet."

"Aye, then, that's it!" exclaimed Mrs. Kent, passing her hand across her forehead as though to clear the cobwebs from her brain. "Why didn't you let me know this before?"—sharply turning to her son Reginald.

"Whŷ didn't I let you know what?" replied the bewildered Reginald. "What do you care about the Blaine family? except, indeed, that they seem to irritate your nerves somehow. There's nothing particular in the fact of one man dying and another stepping into his shoes ; it is a commonplace occurrence enough ; only interesting in this case because the Blaines happen to be our neighbours. Another reason why I never talk much of them to you is that the very name of Blaine seems to act upon your temper as a red rag acts upon a mad bull. Can't imagine why—they never did *you* any harm. I hope, though, we may all settle down on friendly terms when Sir Harold comes home, which I think will be soon."

"I don't believe he ever will come home," said Mrs Kent.

"He has been summoned to return," said Algernon. "I believe he has been travelling for a good many years, but he must come home now, for there are all the formalities of inheritance to be gone through, and all sorts of legal business to be looked after ;

it is one thing to be the heir, another to take possession. However reluctant, he must come back now."

"Well, you will see!" said Mrs. Kent with tightened lips.

"You seem to be developing sphinx-like qualities, mother," laughed Algernon, "and are trying to puzzle our brains with prophetic nonsense. For my part, I am looking anxiously forward to making Sir Harold's acquaintance."

"Why?" The interrogation fell frostily from her lips.

"Because—well, it is rather premature—I did not mean to tell you till it was all settled." He smiled a bright confident smile as he added, "His daughter Claire and I are very much interested in one another—she is the dearest girl in the world, and I hope to induce him to accept *me* as a son, and you to welcome *her* as a daughter."

This startling piece of information fell like a bomb among the complicated thoughts that filled Mrs. Kent's mind. Seeing she remained grave and speechless, he added, "Won't you be willing? Surely you will be glad, mother? You look as grave as though you were ready to forbid the banns."

"I don't know whether I am glad or sorry," she answered slowly; "a little of one and a great deal of the other, I think. But it is all no use. Blind fate is stirring the air round us, and whatever I think, whatever I say, would be like flinging so much thistledown in the teeth of a strong north-easter. Things will go as *fate*, not as *you* or *I* may will them."

"Perhaps that's as well, mother," replied Algernon. "When we try to take things too much in our own hands we are apt to send them all awry, and land ourselves miles away from our wishing point, and catch the shadow instead of the substance, like the dog in the fable."

"I don't know anything about fate," exclaimed Reginald, more gruffly than was usual with him. He could scarcely tell why but he felt as though some under-current was setting against him. "I have paddled my own canoe so far and I mean to go on paddling. It is all very well to consider other people, and put yourself in the background, but there comes an end to that sort of thing." Mrs. Kent, as though she found some hidden meaning in his words, rose up and left the table. The least crumple in the family rose-leaf was visible to Algernon's observant eye, and it was always his endeavour to keep

things smooth and pleasant ; he laughed now as he answered his brother :

"When you take a back seat, Reggy, let us know. So far you have had a front place, and gone at a tolerably good pace too."

Reginald's stout, fast-going old cob was at the door—in a few minutes he would start for the factory, which was about four miles distant. He always rode there and back ; like many stout people he disliked the exercise of walking. Though he would play tennis or cricket half the day and never get tired, yet he wouldn't walk a mile if he could help it. Perhaps he might not have objected to a country stroll with Ruth Levison, but he had had no opportunity for that gentle and congenial exercise. As he rose to go, he inquired :

"I suppose everything is all right for Saturday, mother ? There will be about a hundred and twenty hands, taking them all together, and," he hesitated a second, "I think I told you 'The Friars' are going to send up a female contingent to help the entertainment, to play the piano, and all that sort of thing. I hope we shall score a great success *this time*." He emphasized the last words.

"I'll see that the tables are well spread, and that there's plenty on them," replied his mother ; "so far as that's concerned it will be all right. There shall be no complaints *this time*." She followed him out of the room, as she always did, to see him mount. His eye twinkled as he put his foot in the stirrup, and said, just loud enough for her to hear :

"And mother—you know I never object to little extravagancies, but I do hate your economies. Let there be plenty of everything, and everything of the best."

She nodded ; she knew what he meant. Although for some years she had lived in the midst of plenty she could not get away from the influence of the old days, when she had hard work to make both ends meet, and it was a consideration whether they should eat scraps of cold mutton or indulge in the luxury of a hash. Now her son had gone with the time, and as his wealth increased his ideas enlarged ; luxuries became necessities—the spirit of liberality pervaded all his doings. The servants' hall must be as well supplied as the family table, and a meal in waiting for every comer—no hungry soul was sent empty away. This, what she called "ruinous expenditure," ate like iron into Mrs.

Kent's thrifty soul. Reginald knew that if he left household affairs entirely in his mother's hands she would keep a tight hold, and might even go so far as to lock up larder and dairy, perhaps bung up the beer barrel ; so he took the general superintendence on himself, leaving all minor matters to her. She was mistress of the house under the master's eye. When she expostulated with him on the terrible waste in his daily doings, he had always the one answer ready :

" Paying good wages to good workers—helping our poorer neighbours, feeding the hungry, and clothing the naked—is not money wasted but well spent."

She had been always strongly opposed to the annual entertainment to the workpeople, but all the barriers she set up he knocked down like ninepins, and carried his point. He thought that the relations between master and men should not be confined to the mere business of work and wages, but embrace some knowledge of their social life, its trials, pains, and pleasures ; and he did his best to forward this object. On the last occasion of the gathering of his workpeople with their wives and children, the commissariat department had not been arranged to his satisfaction, whereby his wrath had been righteously roused ; he had *then* spoken sternly on the subject ; *now* he felt it would be enough if he gave a mild reminder of the old shortcomings.

Mrs. Kent stood somewhat in awe of this happy-go-lucky, good-natured son of hers ; kind, considerate, respectful to her he always was, patient and enduring too, but there were bounds she dared not overstep. There was a volcanic fire hidden away somewhere in his nature, and when stirred roughly, well—there was an explosion and it blazed. It is often so with good-natured, easy-going people ; once roused they blow the roof of the world off, while the purely passionate, hot-tempered ones boil over as quickly as a saucepan of milk, and froth and foam, letting off their waste steam ; but there is no damage done.

Mrs. Kent watched her eldest son riding away, whistling as he went. Algernon meanwhile had received the *Times*, just arrived from London, and settled himself to spell it through ; his mother sat opposite to him knitting the everlasting sock, which looked as though it never meant to be finished. Presently she let it fall in her lap—looked thoughtfully from the window,

as though following her thoughts on some far-away flight—then, as recalling herself suddenly, she said :

"Algernon, do you think these Blaines really mean to come on Saturday?"

"They have promised," he answered, "so why shouldn't they?"

"Perhaps this death may make some difference. I think it is indecent to go out pleasuring, and not two weeks since they went into mourning."

"One doesn't plunge into the deepest affliction department for one's great-uncle," he answered, "of whom perhaps we know as little as of our neighbouring crossing-sweeper; and as for pleasuring, I don't think that working hard to amuse such a gathering can be called 'pleasuring.'"

"Blood's thicker than water," said the old lady doggedly.

"Sometimes rather muddier, and would be all the better for a little clearing," rejoined Algernon. "I am glad I can stay over this festivity, for I hope Saturday will be a red letter day in our lives, mother dear," he added, laying his hand affectionately on her.

"Or it may be a black letter day—who can tell?" she answered, with a vexed sigh and frown.

"I'm sorry to see the mother seems to have some fancy against the Blaines," Algernon observed afterwards to his brother.

"It's the liver," said Reginald confidentially. "The old lady's out of sorts, and women are queer—apt to ride restive and jib at new notions. I think she don't cotton to the notion of daughters-in-law, but she'll come round all right, Algy, no fear. The old mother's a trump, and she won't go against us."

(*To be continued.*)

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The Countess Pharamond.

(A SEQUEL TO "SHEBA.")

By "RITA,"

Author of "GRETCHEN," "THE LAIRD O' COCKPEN," "SHEBA," etc., etc.

CHAPTER IX.

A DEFINITION OF LOVE.

"WHO can define love?" asked Hélène de Valette, looking round at the gay and brilliant circle of her companions, lounging and sitting about on every variety of rugs, and cushions, and folding chairs, on the banks of the lovely blue Attersee.

They had come there with horses and carriages and attendants, and lunched at the little inn, and floated over the bright sapphire lake in the picturesque boats, and now in the pleasant dreamy warmth of the afternoon, they were resting and smoking and chatting away the time till sunset.

The scene was wonderfully beautiful.

There is no more lovely lake in Europe than the Attersee of Austria with its wonderful hue of sapphire, that sweeps away and away to the far-off Schaffberg range, solitary and undisturbed save by the trail of some passing steamer. Higher yet, and towering proudly to the blue summer sky, are the Hochlaken and Hoellen range, where the golden eagle has its eyrie and the grey line of the glaciers shine with cold and constant light.

Perhaps the softness and beauty around had lent a touch of poetry or sentiment to the gay groups scattered on the banks. At all events there was less laughter and badinage in the conversation, and when Hélène de Valette took the scented cigarette from between her white teeth, and propounded that question, "Who can define love?" a soft and graceful gravity settled upon the features of her auditors, and they each in turn took up the challenge of her inquiry.

"It is life's master passion," said a young Austrian officer, looking with eyes of adoration at a beautiful brunette to whom he had been devoted for the space of two weeks. "Till one loves, one does not know what life really means."

"That is scarcely a definition," said the duchesse. "You are speaking of the effect of love—not of what it is."

A chorus of voices broke forth. "It is an attraction that becomes mutual because of mutual affinity."

"It is the devotion of the heart to a recognized object of worship."

"It is an ideal we all own—a reality we all deplore—a 'Will-o'-the-Wisp' that leads us into quagmires and pitfalls—a shadow to which fancy gives substance, but which cannot stand the test of time or trial."

"It is attraction."

"It is illusion."

"It is the one feeling that can make or mar life."

"It is the one irrational, and utterly unreasonable, and unsatisfactory feeling. We are not happy till we know it—once knowing it we are always—unhappy."

"My dear people," said the duchesse, laughing, as she tried to stop the chorus, "you are talking very great nonsense. Love is very much what we choose to make it. The question of unhappiness need not enter into it at all. Love is evidently a law of nature and should be accepted and treated as such. However, we are all inclined to deify and exalt it above most other laws; we expect too much and then rail at the inability which fails to comply with our expectations. Disappointment ensues, then anger, then disgust. That is what you call being unhappy for sake of love; I call it making oneself unhappy for sake of misunderstanding the meaning of the word. Lord Amersley, you have not given an opinion yet. I should like to hear what you think?"

Paul's face grew very white at the unexpected challenge; his eyes turned to the blue waters, and the dark range of mountains.

"What one thinks of love, madame, is scarcely an answer to your challenge to define it."

"Never mind the definition," answered the duchesse. "Your nation, as a rule, take love very solemnly and coldly; it is an episode of life, not the pivot and mainspring of its future."

"The natures that seem cold are not always so," said Paul. "But no coldness can avert fate, and love is fate."

"You really think so?" asked the Countess Pharamond quickly. "That is my belief too."

She had not spoken before, but now her face grew eager and absorbed. He was not looking at her, or indeed at any of the women scattered about. His thoughts were far back in the past, the past that held all that meant life for him—in whose light of memory all other things looked dark, and dim, and colourless.

"Yes," he said gravely, "I believe it. The one master passion that can mar, or make our lives, is certainly no mere blind result of chance. Its destiny has a more mysterious past, a wider future than mortal eyes may read; the sense that another life is necessary to our own, the recognition in that other life of something which attracts and holds us, but to which all the rest of the world may be blind and deaf, *that* is what love means when it possesses the heart. It may not be beauty, or goodness, or wit, or genius, or virtue, or purity, or any one definable cause that first weaves the spell of attraction, but the spell is there for all that, to blind our sense, to bind our reason, to rule our life—for weal or woe."

He ceased speaking. Various expressions of mockery, incredulity, amusement, gravity, doubt, were on the faces of the gay group around him.

"You really believe in a love that rules life for always?" asked the pretty brunette, who was in that most agreeable state of love, being adored without adoring.

"Most certainly I do. There may be many imitations of the master passion, there is but one real love in any mortal life."

"Not for men," interposed Hélène de Valette. "I do not believe in a man being constant all his life to one love, one woman, unless of course he never obtains her. Then she becomes idealized, spiritualized, exalted—what you will. She is the only one of her sex whom he has not known in that fatal intimacy which is love's inevitable disillusion. For ever round her brow floats the halo of divinity. She fills his dreams because she has never realized them, or disappointed them. He thinks of her as he thinks of no other woman, because he does not know her as he knows the others. If fate or death come between, he worships her with the sentiment of the soul, not the grosser memories of the mind. But, believe me, I have seen a great deal of life, and of men and women, and I am convinced that no love yet was ever

attained without satiety and *ennui* as its inevitable result. Love dies of its own gain, wearies of its own conquest, and suffers repletion at its own banquet. The Greeks did well to give him wings ; it is the folly of later civilization that would load him with chains instead."

"I bow to Madame de Valette's superior knowledge of the world, but all the same I do not agree with it," said Paul.

"Surely there is no general rule for love, its fidelity or falseness," said the young Austrian. "Natures differ as much as external appearances. There can be no hard and fast line for any feeling or emotion. One will suffer, another will scoff; one will remember, another will forget. The sport of one life may mean the death of another. Two great and equally matched natures very rarely meet, and in love it is always the weakest that suffers. I speak without regard to sex. A man is not always what nature meant him to be, nor a woman either."

"Life is a game of cross purposes," said the Countess Pharamond. "It seems as if the right lives never meet at the right time; consequently, when they *do* meet and a natural affinity displays itself, they become the wrong lives. That is what Lord Amersley calls 'fate.'"

"Love should only have a beginning," said the Duchesse de Valette, with a little ironical smile. "We are all charming then. In the middle of the romance we turn aside to yawn, at the end we exchange the yawn for a frown, the *ennui* for a quarrel. *C'est tout fini !* The only pity is we cannot learn the art of amicable separation. It would save an infinity of trouble, besides the wear and tear of emotions."

"Scenes are in bad taste ; I always avoid them," said the pretty brunette, whose husband was an elderly and good-humoured baron attached to the Court at Vienna, and very lenient in his treatment of his wife's whims, which he wisely ignored instead of resenting.

"We seem to have wandered very far from the point we intended to discuss," said the Duchesse de Valette.

"No one ought to attempt to define love, only to enjoy it," said her friend and admirer the Comte de Besançon, in a semi-audible whisper. "We know the sun *is*, because we enjoy its warmth ; we know that love *is*, because we enjoy its sensations. Scientists would explain the one, and confuse us by a fearful

jumble of words that make such explanation at once terrifying and ambiguous. Philosophers would analyze love, and rob it of its romance, its subtlety, its vague and beautiful poesy. Let us be content to bask in the warmth of the sun, in the light of love's flame. Night will extinguish the one ; death will annihilate the other. We have life to enjoy both. Why not enjoy them ? "

" Do you really think," asked the Countess Pharamond, " that death annihilates all memory of love ? "

The Frenchman shrugged his shoulders. " But certainly, madame. Why should it outlive any other emotion ? It gives us so much trouble in this life that I prefer to think it terminates with it."

" You are only looking at the emotional side of the question," said Paul gravely. " What about the spiritual ? I thought we had agreed that the attraction or affinity between two natures is a subtle recognition on the part of each of something quite removed from external charm. *That* may allure the senses, it cannot enchain the heart. The higher and more spiritual essence has nothing to do with the physical nature, therefore it is only logical to suppose it cannot perish with that physical nature."

" Logic and love. Ah, my friend, you go too deep," laughed Hélène de Valette. " There you see again comes in the solid good sense of your nation. It is only the southern temperament that understands love ; its passion, its folly, its abandonment, its despair."

" And forgets as easily as it loves," said Paul.

" Well, what would you ? It is surely better to forget than to hug a lifeless corpse in one's arms for the rest of one's life ; to make oneself unhappy because one remembers what 'has been' instead of enjoying what *is* ? "

" You have the philosophy of your age and time, madame," said Paul. " I bow to its wisdom, though I cannot admire its selfishness. I, for my part, would prefer the unhappiness that memory brings, to the light and fleeting passions that owe no fidelity and exact no faith."

" Ah ! You have a romance in your life," said the duchesse quickly. " I always thought so. Are there men really capable of being true to the romance of a memory ? Surely that went out with muslin frocks and short waists, and Wordsworth and Miss Austen's novels."

There was a general laugh ; but Paul's face looked stern and cold as the Countess Pharamond had never seen it.

He felt angered at being drawn into this discussion, and at his own inability to treat it as lightly as the others had done. What could these idle foolish chatterers, living only for the world and its excitements and rivalries, know of any deep and sacred feeling ? What was love to them but a name that dignified every sensual desire, every fleeting fancy, every amorous impulse that beauty, or inaccessibility, or the *prestige* of fashion awakened ?

Disgust and anger awoke in his heart. He rose somewhat abruptly and sauntered away to the water's edge, watched regretfully by some eyes, amusedly by others.

"Is it not true, our saying ?" observed Hélène de Valette. "Do not Englishmen take their pleasures sadly—even love ? Our friend makes himself unhappy in order to prove that he has been happy—or—is about to be," she added, as an after-thought, as she glanced at the Countess Pharamond.

Bessie felt herself colour slightly. No one knew better than herself how little she had won from that grave and courteous but most chilling friendship, which yet meant for her more than the praise and admiration of all other men.

"He talks great folly," said the young Austrian. "Surely a living love is better than a dead memory. Is there a story in his past ?" he asked, turning to the Countess Pharamond.

"He was married, and his wife died a year afterwards," she answered coldly.

"She should be a happy woman," said Hélène de Valette maliciously. "That is to say, if she knows anything about his fidelity. Most men are not over faithful to living wives, let alone to the memory of dead ones. The story of the 'Faithful Soul' is the story of most divided lives. Probably, however, had she lived he would have been tired of her long ere this. Did you know her ?" she asked abruptly of the countess.

"Yes, I knew her. She was one of my earliest friends," said Bessie. "The first time I saw her she had on a dirty torn holland frock, and her hair was flying like a mane down her back. Afterwards she developed into a genius. She was never pretty, and had the oddest and most abrupt manners."

The duchesse laughed. "She had the art of making herself remembered at all events," she said. "Most of us fail signally

in doing that. We cannot even keep our lovers faithful for very long—if we love them."

A general storm of denial and reproach answered those daring words, and under cover of it the group broke up and dispersed. Bessie found herself near Paul, who was still standing by the lake.

"Did you really mean all you said?" she asked him. "Are you so faithful to a dead past?"

That cold stern look she had grown to dread, came into his face.

"Yes," he said, "I should be very ungrateful to fate for the gift it gave me, did I not still revere and cherish its memory."

"Your constancy is very praiseworthy," she said with some sarcasm and irritation in her voice.

"I do not think so," he answered. "It is a voluntary tribute to a nature that demanded the highest and most exalted worship."

"Sheba must have altered very much," she said ironically. "I scarcely think her home circle would have agreed with your estimate of her character."

"They did not understand it," said Paul coldly. "She was never appreciated; one could not wonder at that. I had the pleasure of seeing and speaking to Mrs. Levison once. It was a pleasure I never desired to repeat. As for her husband—"

"Well, he was rather trying," said Bessie. "And Dolly, that awful little Dolly—I often wonder what sort of woman she will turn out. As a child she was simply atrocious."

"Is it not time to return to Ischl?" said Paul somewhat abruptly. "There seems to be a movement in the direction of the carriages."

He hated to discuss Sheba with the Countess Pharamond. It angered him, and he knew very well how little real love there had been between them.

"I suppose it is," said Bessie, somewhat reluctantly. "Well, this place was certainly worth coming to see. It is lovely."

"It will soon be spoilt," said Paul, as he moved away by her side. "How is it civilization always jars with nature? Solitude loses all charm with the tramp of the excursionist, and the trail of smoke and steam. Rush and hurry and turmoil where all has been peace and beauty—that is what we bring with us and call—improvement."

"You are growing cynical," said the countess, unfurling her dainty parasol with a due regard for her complexion. "It is a pity you are not happy—you have everything to make you so."

"Perhaps," he said, "that—is the very reason."

CHAPTER X.

"THE BETTER PART OF VALOUR."

"How soon can we leave this place?" asked Paul of Müller that evening after his return from the Attersee.

"How soon? To-morrow—next week—when you wish," answered the old German. "Are you tired of it?" he continued, watching keenly the stern averted face which was turned to the window.

"I am not tired of the place—it is lovely," said Paul. "But these people irritate and annoy me. I do not wish for their society, and yet it seems impossible to escape from it."

"Is the world spoiling him?" reflected Müller. "Or is he only suffering from that natural and irrevocable law which governs human life—satiety? I suppose he has everything he can desire—the world would say so. But the world only gives us what we take to it. I think he takes very little."

"My dear Paul," he said aloud, "I am not surprised that you are tired of your gay friends. To me they seem unutterably foolish, and their life as tiresome as it is useless. I wish you had to work for your living again. You would certainly be more contented. After all, if life gives us that gift we ought to be thankful. Do you never mean to sing again?" he added abruptly.

Paul shook his head. "Not for the world," he said. "Why should I? I do not desire its praise. I do not seek fame. If I sing now it is only to please the boy—or myself."

"Has not Madame Pharamond ever asked you?"

"Often," he said indifferently; "but I have always refused."

"Do you like her—truthfully and honestly, Paul—do you like that woman?" asked Müller abruptly.

"I cannot say I do," Paul answered. "I have never thought much about her, but I certainly should say she is a little more sincere and less empty-headed than the women of her set. For the rest—she is no more to me than they are."

"Did you ever think that you might be something more to—her?" asked Müller with significance.

Paul turned from the window and looked at the old man with unfeigned amazement.

"Never—on my honour," he exclaimed emphatically. "What makes you say such a thing, Müller?"

The old man shrugged his shoulders and rose to fill his pipe. "Observation, I suppose. You must be very blind not to have discovered it yourself."

The blood rushed dark and swift to Paul's white face.

"You should not say such a thing even if you think it, my friend," he said very coldly; "but in this case I am sure you are mistaken."

"Ah, Paul, you are not of your time," said the old German gravely. "You are too chivalrous and too trusting. The women of the world do not appreciate the one virtue—they certainly do not desire the other. You have been fortunate in finding one woman, Paul, on whom a man's strength might safely lean—in whose love and fidelity he might safely trust. They are rare enough, God knows. But that is not the point we are discussing. Can you not recognize that though you are blind to women's attractions, they are not equally so to yours? You are a man on whom their eyes would rest only too willingly, while yours do not even see them. I am dispassionate—I look on at the game as it is played. I have watched Madame Pharamond. I mistrust her, and I give you due warning. Beware of that woman. She will be a merciless foe to one who offends her."

"I am not likely to offend her," said Paul coldly. "She is no more to me than any other acquaintance I have made."

"I hardly fancy she thinks so. Are you aware how much you have been together—how constantly she has singled you out for special marks of attention?"

"Pooh!" said Paul contemptuously. "She is only a frivolous *mondaine*, like all the rest of her set. However, she will not see much more of me. Let us leave here and go to some quieter place. Is it ever possible to get away from the world?" he added wearily.

"Possible, but not easy," said Müller.

Paul still stood by the open window, looking out at the scene that had now grown so familiar, yet lost none of its beauty because of that familiarity. His mind was in that dual state which at once recognizes and rejects a fact. A thousand hints and

incidents flashed back to his memory and forced him to admit the truth of old Müller's warning. His instinct told him what the innate chivalry of his nature sought to deny, and he felt disgusted and incredulous all in one.

"Well, let us leave here to-morrow," he said suddenly. "We need make no formal *adieu*. A note of farewell to the duchesse—that will be sufficient—and let us get away somewhere into the heart of forests or valleys; the quieter and more remote the better."

"We might go to the Oetzthal," said Müller. "It is a long journey, but we can rest for a few days at Insbruck. I was there once many years ago. It was quiet enough then; but I suppose the Oberinnthal railway will have made a difference."

"Let us go there," said Paul quickly. "We need not travel too hastily, but I shall be glad to leave Ischl behind—that I frankly confess."

"Then we will leave it to-morrow," said the old German readily.

He was thinking that it might not be very brave to run away from a woman, but that in this case it was the wisest and safest course to pursue. He had a horror of entanglements, and he saw that the Countess Pharamond was quite foolish enough and blind enough to compromise herself as well as Paul, if that one little devil's trick of "opportunity" were played in the game of chance.

Meanwhile Paul crossed over to the writing-table, and there penned a few brief lines to Madame de Valette, saying that he and his friend had been suddenly called away from Ischl, and desiring his kind remembrance and *adieu* to all her party. He made no special mention of the Countess Pharamond, nor did the letter convey any regret for his abrupt departure.

It was brought to the duchesse as they were at their mid-day breakfast next morning. She read it with some surprise and a little annoyance.

"Have they quarrelled?" she thought, and glanced across at her companion, who had been unusually grave and silent during the meal. "How disappointing," she said aloud, and tossed the note across the table—"and so sudden, too. Did he give you any hint of change of plans yesterday?"

Bessie read the brief cold lines, and flushed to her very brow.

Hélène de Valette, who was studying her closely, drew her own conclusions.

"Was it a quarrel? Is she *un peu prude* after all?" she thought, as the painful colour slowly died away, leaving Bessie's face cold and pale and indignant.

"It is rather sudden," she said, folding up the letter and handing it back to the duchesse. "I suppose it is on account of that old German professor. He was always grumbling that the place did not suit him. I wonder where they have gone," she added suddenly.

Madame de Valette smiled significantly. "Oh, *ma chère*, that is of no account, since they *are* gone. After all, perhaps it is as well. Your husband will be here in two days' time. He might not approve the devotion of the handsome Englishman."

"How do you know Pharamond is coming so soon?" asked Bessie quickly. "He has not written to me."

"I had a note from him yesterday," said the duchesse coolly. "Surely he must have written to you also. He said he was doing so."

Bessie bit her lip to keep back the answer that longed for utterance. Indifferent as she was to her husband, she did not approve of so flagrant a piece of courtesy as this. She rose from the table and went out into the balcony. A sense of pain and disappointment was at her heart, and her eyes grew dim as they looked out at the dark woods, and bright green water. She had deceived herself after all. Paul was utterly cold and utterly indifferent. It meant nothing to him to leave her, and he had not even used the common courtesy of friendship in addressing his farewell to herself instead of to the duchesse. That fact hurt her more than anything else. Had she really no hold over his memory, no place in his interest? Was he glad to go from here, knowing that she remained behind? Would he not even miss her as the days went by? How dark and lonely they would seem to her! How little she cared for any one here, or the distractions and amusements forced upon her acceptance, now that one face would be always absent!

The thought of her husband's speedy return filled her with a horror and disgust very different from her usual passive acceptance of marital obligations. She had left him with indifference, but she would meet him with something very near akin to repulsion.

But soon anger usurped the place of every other feeling. What would these people think? What would the malicious tongues chatter of her and of her admirer's sudden desertion? He had wounded her pride more deeply than he could possibly have imagined; but perhaps the very sharpness and unexpectedness of that wound enabled her to hide her shame, and gave her strength to face the curious eyes and contemptuous pity which is society's only sympathy in such a case.

She left the balcony and went back to the sitting-room, where Madame de Valette was amusing herself by smoking cigarettes and reading her numerous letters.

"What is the programme for to day?" she asked indifferently.

Madame de Valette looked up with her keen, malicious eyes. "She bears it very well," she thought; "but all the same she cannot deceive me."

"There is nothing very special, I believe," she said aloud, "unless we go to Aussee and see the Spitalkirche. But you do not care for churches."

The Countess Pharamond laughed. "My dear Hélène," she said, "I have yet to learn that any of us do care for the places we go to see. They are merely an excuse for riding, or driving, or lunching somewhere. As for churches, one is very like another, and as I never understand the guides, and they will insist upon one seeing all sorts of things one never wants to see, it is no wonder I get bored."

"I am afraid you will miss your cavalier," said the duchesse with a little odd smile; "though you will have no difficulty in supplying his place."

"Of that I am quite sure," said Bessie with well-acted indifference, as she left the room to make her *toilette* for the Kursaal.

"What has happened between them?" mused Hélène de Valette, leaning back in her chair with a scented cigarette between her teeth. "Did he grow tired, or is he only—cautious? I hoped he would be here when Pharamond arrived. It would have been amusing. He is so very sure of her."

She did not go to the Kursaal that morning. She sat on there in the pretty sunny balcony, smoking and reflecting. Her plans were all disarranged. She had never dreamt that Paul would desert them in this abrupt manner, and on the morrow Pharamond would be here.

"All the same I will give him a hint," she said to herself. "It will be hard if I lose my vengeance after all, because one person is stupid and the other blind."

It was the evening of the second day before Pharamond arrived—two days that had dragged wearily along to his wife, even though their hours held a keen fear of that dreaded meeting.

The perpetual clatter and chatter of tongues irritated her, yet she could not escape them without remark. This pretty green nook among the hills seemed to have grown grey and dark and wearisome, yet she knew she was condemned to stay on there, for Pharamond had intimated he was going through a course of the waters. To be buried here in the heart of the Salzkammergut seemed now both irksome and unpleasant since it had become an obligation, but it was impossible to change her imprisonment, and she must not even complain against it.

On the evening of that second day she and Madame de Valette returned from a drive in the cool evening dusk to learn that Count Pharamond had arrived. He came to meet them as they left their carriage.

"My best compliments on your looks, mesdames," he said, as he greeted them. "Ischl has indeed done wonders."

"I have taken great care of your wife, Pharamond," said Madame de Valette, "and I agree with you. She at least has renewed youth—health—beauty——"

"If the place will do as much for me as it has done for you both I shall have reason to congratulate myself," said Pharamond, as they all entered their *salon* in the Kaiserinn.

He saluted his wife and kissed the hands of the duchesse. He seemed in a very good humour, but Bessie thought he looked ill, and bloated, and very much aged. Evidently his life in Hungary had not been of the kind to renew *his* youth or health.

"I am fatigued—it is a long wearisome journey," he said, throwing himself into a chair. "Have you ordered dinner to be served here—I do not wish to dine at the *table d'hôte*."

"Yes; it will be ready in half-an-hour," said his wife coldly. "If you will excuse me, I will go and dress," she added, with a glance at the clock. He only nodded, and she left the room.

As the door closed, Pharamond rose from his chair and approached the duchesse. "You have grown quite beautiful,

ma chère," he said, and he stooped and kissed her with a warmth and eagerness that had not distinguished his greeting to his wife.

She laughed and pushed him aside. " *Tais-toi*, my friend; you must be discreet," she said. " Your *chère* Bessie is not so blind as we fancy. Besides, her stay here has opened her eyes. She is a great attraction; she has many admirers. Are you not jealous?"

" Of many—no. There is no special one, I suppose?"

The duchesse hesitated a moment. " Not now," she said slowly and with emphasis.

Pharamond's brow grew dark; his eyes flashed. " Not—now. Does that mean to say there has been some one? Who was he?"

" An Englishman—some one she knew in Australia. He was travelling as Mr. Paul Meredith, but his real name is Lord Amersley."

A fierce oath fell from Pharamond's lips. " Amersley—he has been here? I thought he was in England."

" Well, my friend, England is not so very far away. Yes, he was here for his health. They were great friends, your wife and himself. He is very handsome and very charming. We miss him much."

Pharamond came a step nearer and seized her arm almost roughly. " What do you mean?" he said. " I hate hints."

She only shrugged her shoulders and laughed. " Ah! my friend," she said, " you *would* marry. Do you suppose you are to be the only man who will not have cause to regret it?"

CHAPTER XI.

PIN-PRICKS.

DINNER was over.

Bessie was sitting in the *salon* writing letters. Pharamond and Madame de Valette were in the balcony looking down on the Esplanade, and smoking.

The count looked gloomy and disturbed. He had watched his wife very keenly, and he noted a difference both in her looks and manners. She was colder and more composed, and less timid of him. She even ventured on sarcasms instead of accepting them. Her inquiries as to himself and his occupations were plainly those

of duty, not of wisely interest ; and he felt angered and indignant at the very change he had done his best to bring about.

"She is changed," he said to the duchesse.

"Well, what would you ? Like all women, she has learnt her power. It depends on yourself as to how she will use it."

"She shall only use it as I choose," he muttered savagely. "I have told you I do not mean to play the *rôle* of the deceived husband."

The duchesse laughed—a little maliciously. "What nonsense you talk," she said. "Just as if every man has not to play the *rôle* a woman chooses ! Only, if she be wise, she never lets him know that he *is* playing it."

"Are these the precepts you have been instilling into my wife's mind ?" asked Pharamond coldly. "If so, I doubt not you found an apt pupil."

"You are very ill-tempered," said Madame de Valette, puffing a cloud of scented tobacco from her pretty lips ; "and that is unwise, let me tell you. She will only contrast you with—others—and you will suffer by the comparison. Men are so foolish. Before marriage they spoil us with adoration ; after it, they disgust us by indifference, or weary us with exactions. You disillusion us as rapidly as you ever sought to charm. Then you wonder that we resent the change—or console ourselves for it."

"It is as much your fault as ours," said Pharamond. "Few wives seem to consider they need exert any charm over the men who have married them. We are just as readily disenchanted as you—though you seem to forget that."

"One should not expect happiness from marriage—only comfort," said Hélène de Valette sententiously.

"Is there such a thing as happiness ? I doubt it," muttered Pharamond.

"It either means very much or very little in a life—the wildest dream of imagination, or the simplest content," said the duchesse. "I believe the poor have it—at least, so poets and novelists tell us—but it is not a thing one can generalize, as no two natures either demand or accept it in the same manner. It depends so much on ourselves—our temperaments. If a nature is analytical, fastidious, critical, exacting, capricious, sceptical, it has little chance of even a fleeting vision of happiness. Humanity is a poor thing ; its capabilities are very limited, whatever may be its

desires. The most agreeable and exciting pursuits become intolerably wearisome, if of daily occurrence. If one were as rich as a Rothschild, one could still only eat one dinner a day. If one had a seraglio of loveliness, the heart would still only acknowledge one favourite. Time is the enemy of passion, the avenger of enjoyment, the Nemesis of life. The only pleasures we ever really enjoy are those we anticipate."

"Oh, we can realize some, and enjoy them very successfully," said Pharamond with a meaning glance.

"Not love," she answered almost seriously. "Its great and only charm is difficulty—and uncertainty. Dream, hope, suffer, and though you know it not you are far happier than if you attain. You meet your love in a moonlit garden ; you exchange a few words with dread of discovery ; you treasure the flower from her breast, the glove from her hand ; you are in a turmoil of doubt as to whether you will meet her again ; you live years in every hour of expectation. That is one side of the picture. Take the other. You win her ; you eat, drink, sleep, walk, talk together for, say two years ? She finds she is bored. You discover she is no divinity. Yet you really are the same two people who kissed in the moonlit garden. The only change is in the position you now hold to each other. Habit is fatal to love, whatever it may be to affection. The rose will not flower beneath a stone. Love will not blossom beneath the crushing weight of monotony, and the commonplace usages of daily association."

"I suppose you are right," said Pharamond. "Yet there are women of whom one might never tire."

"They are the women you love—not the women who love you," said the duchesse with her little ironical smile.

"You are one of them," he said lowering his voice as he stooped and kissed her hand.

She laughed softly, and tossed the end of her cigarette over the balcony. "Oh, *mon ami*, you say so because you have not married me. If you had—" she shrugged her shoulders and turned as if to re-enter the *salon*. "If you had," she went on, glancing back at him, and laughing at his gloomy and absorbed face, "you would be making just such a speech to some other woman."

She went in then, and left him to pursue his own train of thought in the solitude and the moonlight.

"She is right—she is perfectly right," he said to himself. "One

loves—one attains—one wearies. Only I never loved Bessie. I think sometimes I have never loved any one but that cold, strange child, with her great serious eyes, and her stately grace of manner, who always seemed to hate and shrink from me. And to think she is dead now *Dead*—all that youth and beauty and genius lost and buried in the cold earth! What is the use of life if such a brief span be all that is granted to it? A flower's birth and death between dawn and sunset, and all is over! And scientists and philosophers can tell us no more, and priests with their creeds give no better comfort. We are ; we are not—that is all. The physiology of the senses teaches us to enjoy, if we can ; and for the rest, as Hélène said, we are bored, dissatisfied, envious, discontented—that is the sum total of human existence."

The serene sky, the radiant moonlight, the softly flowing water, had no spell for him—nothing to teach, nothing to recall. The world had given him much, but the world had also dulled his senses and blunted his feelings to all that was beautiful and simple in life and nature.

That is the way of the world. If it gives, it takes away far more, and in the end the feverish race for pleasure, looks but a poor thing, and the prizes at its goal a very inadequate reward for spent energies and exhausted efforts. But who shall make the runner believe that, while strength and youth are his, and the goal but just in view?

Pharamond was no longer young—his best days were over. He had seen life in every shape and form, and exhausted most of its pleasures and excitements. Self-indulgence and vice had robbed him of personal attraction, and time had laid a somewhat heavy hand upon him. The fact of these disadvantages became disagreeably significant when he thought of his wife's youth and beauty, and of the vengeance she might yet take.

Had he been wise after all in giving her to the tutorship of Hélène de Valette—a woman with no more principle than a parrot, whose caprices had been as notorious as her debts, and who had only just been able to keep her head above the social waters of Parisian life by dint of her sharp tongue, and serene audacity?

It is curious how much society will forgive a person who shows no fear of it. To the cringer or the coward it is always merciless—possibly because these are not the virtues of innocence, as apparently falsehood and audacity have become.

Pharamond paced slowly up and down the little flower-decked balcony, his thoughts ranging from his former life of pleasure and extravagance to the sudden *coup* that had turned him into a married man, and brought him face to face with that old life under totally different auspices. His face looked gloomy under his shaggy brows. He could not forget the hints of Hélène de Valette, nor rid himself of the uncomfortable sensation they had left behind.

He had good cause to hate Paul Meredith, and it annoyed him excessively to think that his social position now equalled if it did not exceed his own. He almost wished he had not gone to Hungary, but had remained here, if only for the satisfaction of openly outwitting his rival. No doubt it would have been stupid and monotonous to play the comedy of *le mari amoureux*; but he would have had the satisfaction of torturing his wife, and thwarting her plans for a secret or open intrigue with Meredith.

He had no faith in women, or in men either, and he knew how far even a caprice might lead them on, let its commencement be ever so innocent. He wondered if there had really been any truth in Hélène's remarks? He almost hated her for the discomfort they had given him. And yet he knew of old how malicious she was—this frivolous artificial woman, with her golden *perruque*, and her endless *papelitos*, and her sharp speeches and ironical laughter. True daughter of Parisian society, as he was a true son, it was yet curious how mutually distrustful they were, and how beneath their long friendship there lurked a conviction of mutual worthlessness.

With that sullen resentment which Madame de Valette's words had left behind Pharamond at last sought his wife's room. He was met on the threshold by her maid. "Madame had retired for the night . . . Madame was indisposed. She begged monsieur to accept her excuses, but she could not be disturbed."

Pharamond listened, and turned on his heel, disgusted and annoyed at this rebuff. "*Dieu!* but she is learning to play her part well," he muttered. "Is this Hélène's teaching, or her lover's?"

* * * * *

There was no doubt that the Countess Pharamond was changed—seriously, strangely, unaccountably. She irritated while she

baffled all her husband's endeavours to fathom the cause or extent of the alteration. She kept him at a distance while playing the part of an amiable and complaisant wife. She neither rebelled against his tyranny nor opposed his wishes, and yet he felt that her very obedience was defiance. He could not understand her. Cold she had always been, but not with the haughty and supreme indifference that now marked that coldness. He felt that she recoiled from him, that his presence wearied and his caresses disgusted her, yet her passive submission left nothing to be desired, save, indeed, the spirit that should have animated it, or lifted it for a single moment above the dead level of passivity.

"She grows detestable," he muttered irritably to Hélène de Valette, as day after day passed on, and the life of Ischl began to pall on his jaded tastes. "She is not amusing, or grateful, or ever ill-tempered. *That* would be better than nothing. It is like living with a wall of ice in front of one!"

The duchesse laughed. "She is—what you have made her," she said maliciously. "Surely, my friend, you of all men did not expect to keep a wife always tender and adoring? And really I do not see you have much cause for complaint. Her manner is very perfect, her obedience quite touching. And if she is cold, as you say, that is a very desirable virtue in a wife—she is the same to every one."

"Except, perhaps, the man who lives in her thoughts," muttered Pharamond.

The duchesse shrugged her still beautiful shoulders. "*Mais, mon ami*, would you deny a women even the sentiment of memory?" she said. "That is a little too hard—especially when she is not happy."

"Why shouldn't she be happy? She has everything to make her so."

"You mean she has—you?" said Hélène, with that little ironical smile which meant so much. "But perhaps, my friend, you are less adorable as a husband than as a lover, and women will tire, you know. Your sex cannot monopolize that fatal boredom which is the result of constant companionship. Believe me, ours suffer equally."

"I was a fool to marry," growled Pharamond, his eyes watching the graceful figure of his wife, who was sauntering under the trees in the morning sunshine attended by an admiring court. How

she had altered ! Was it possible that this distinguished-looking *élégante* could be one and the same as that girl, with her round white shoulders and *creped* hair and stiff flounces, whom he had first seen in the Levisons' drawing-room ? It seemed impossible.

A vague sense of irritation and helplessness awoke in him. What if she were not the malleable being he had supposed—if she chose to shape her own life, and live it too, in her own manner ?

Brutal and tyrannical as his nature was, he was yet conscious that something in hers could meet and defy it with an obstinacy and a chillness that was extremely difficult to combat. Once he had congratulated himself that she was not like the frivolous, mindless chatterers of his world ; but now he almost wished she did resemble them. At least he would know better how to vanquish, or intimidate her.

"She is really very sensible," continued Madame de Valette as she glanced at the gloomy face by her side. "I don't see what you have to complain about. Her flirtations will never be compromising, I am sure. That is the best of having English blood in one's veins. They can be cool and calculating—over there. It is not the sin but the scandal that frightens them. Here we forget the one for sake of the other."

"There may be some grain of loyalty or honour, even at the bottom of one's vices," said Pharamond.

The duchesse looked at him with undisguised amazement. Then she laughed aloud. "What miracle is this?" she said ; "you to believe in goodness?"

"I suppose I am not the only man in the world who does," he said sulkily. "No doubt it exists somewhere. The priests tell us so. Only it does not often come in our way."

"No," said Madame de Valette with a little contemptuous smile as she looked at the groups of idlers and *mondaines* scattered about. "You are right, Maxime ; it doesn't often come in—our way."

Book II.

CHAPTER I.

SHEBA ORMATROYD LEARNS THE MEANING OF "FAME."

THE murky light of a November day shed its dismal gloom over the busy thoroughfares round and about the Strand. The

street lamps gleamed through the foggy atmosphere in a cheerless and spectral fashion, as if resenting the early call upon their duty. The dome of the great cathedral was almost shrouded from sight, and a dark mist drooping over the city, left it only bare outlines and incessant noise to reveal its existence.

A few stragglers, the waifs and strays of misery, looked moodily out from hungry eyes at the passers-by, almost too dispirited to ask for alms, or offer excuse for doing so by the plea of the useless wares they held in their cold and trembling hands.

Huge vehicles lumbered slowly along in the gloom, to be swallowed up by the obscurity beyond. Hoarse cries and shouts gave warning of impending collisions, as the cabs and omnibuses made their way westwards. The day was darkening moodily into the sullen blackness of night, though it was but two hours after noon, and the foot passengers hurried along the damp and slippery pavements, only eager to conclude whatever business had forced them into so uninviting an atmosphere.

At the corner of one of the streets abutting on Ludgate Circus a girl was standing, and looking at the noisy crowded thoroughfare with a perplexed and unfamiliar gaze. She was simply dressed in black; her face was pale and somewhat anxious-looking ; her eyes, large and dark and strangely mournful for so young a face, glanced from side to side as if seeking some direction, for which she was too timid to inquire.

The sight of a policeman crossing the roadway at last inspired her with confidence. "Can you direct me to Sharpe Lane?" she asked. "It is near here I know, but I can't tell which turning to take."

The blue-coated "Robert" looked at her with an indifference born of many sights and scenes in which her sex had been prominently distinguished.

"Sharpe Lane," he repeated ; "you're close by it. Cross over and turn to your right."

The girl thanked him and disappeared into the gloom. She soon found the street she wanted, and presently, by the aid of a friendly lamp-post, she discovered the number of the house. It was not an inviting-looking house, and certainly it did not come up to her expectations, for she looked at the address on the card she carried with grave doubts as to whether she had not made a

mistake. "It must be right. There is the name," she said—"Mixson and Co., publishers. . . . But what a wretched place!"

She put the card in her pocket and slowly ascended the dark and dirty staircase. At the first landing she found a door with ground glass panels, on which the name of the firm was engraved. She knocked timidly, and was told to "Come in" by a voice from within. Obeying the invitation she found herself in a dingy sort of office, where three or four young clerks were seated at different desks. They all raised their heads and looked at her as she approached a sort of counter and addressed herself to the clerk nearest to it.

"Is Mr. Mixson in?" she asked.

The young man regarded her with an air of perplexity and indecision.

"Have you an appointment?" he said.

"I wrote saying I would call this afternoon. I have a letter of introduction from Waterson and Co., Melbourne. Perhaps you will be kind enough to take in my name."

She handed a slip of paper across the counter. The young man still looked doubtful. "I don't think Mr. Mixson's in himself," he said cautiously, as befitted one initiated into the sacred mysteries of publishing and editorship—"but I'll ask."

He looked at the name and then at the young woman. "Wonder if she's an author?" he thought. "What a rum name! She's not much in the governor's line, I should say."

He retreated through another door, and the girl remained standing there with an uncomfortable consciousness of being stared at by three pairs of eyes, and an ever-increasing wonderment at the shabby and almost poverty-stricken surroundings of a firm whom she had heard were a commercial marvel.

Presently the clerk returned. "Mr. Mixson's in. Will you step this way?" he said.

She followed him, and found herself in a small dingy room, where shelves of dusty books were piled from floor to ceiling. Before a desk littered with papers, letters and MSS. of all descriptions was seated a red-faced, portly man. A tendency to good living betrayed itself in face and figure. The florid nose proclaimed a somewhat devoted disciple of Bacchus. The blue eyes, keen and humorous though they still were, had the bloodshot gleam of habitual intemperance. It was the wreck of a splendid

frame, a handsome person, a keen intellect, that sat at that desk, and conducted the business of Mixson and Co. Only the wreck, for Patrick Mixson had once been renowned as the "handsome Irishman," and commercial fame and fortune had alike been at his disposal. Gifted with all an Irishman's wit, humour, and audacity, he had won success with an ease little short of marvellous. He possessed that useful gift for a successful business man—utter unscrupulousness—and added to that the additional virtues of a heart that was supremely selfish, and a nature both callous and egotistic. It was no wonder that Pat Mixson succeeded where others failed. He talked, persuaded, bullied, and cheated his authors with the most exquisite good-nature, and the most sublime effrontery. He ruled them with a rod of iron, and bound them down by terms and agreements that just missed passing the border-line between legal and illegal dealings.

Only one of the many brain-plodders whom Mixson and Co. had introduced to the literary world had been really brilliant, or distinguished. When Pat Mixson found that this special author had all the elements of popularity and invention locked in that small auburn-hued head of hers, he did the wisest thing he could possibly have done in the interests of both—he married her. Having thus procured the sole right to her books and herself, he turned his slave into an obedient machine that worked unceasingly—if in a somewhat monotonous groove. He brought out her books in all sorts of forms and editions. He monopolized for her the chief honours of bookstalls and railway stations. In an age when the vulgarity of advertising is the only pioneer to success, he spared neither ways nor means to puff her into celebrity.

The public who had admired her talent were dazzled by her rapid success. Every fresh book was eagerly welcomed, and the fame of Mixson and Co., publishers, was only the fame of Pat Mixson's wife.

It was to this important personage that this new and unknown author presented herself. She was somewhat disconcerted to find that he was not alone. Another clerk was seated at a desk in the corner of the dingy room, and the room itself communicated with another office, also filled with clerks, who sat with bowed heads and shoulders over their desks, and represented the dignity of the firm by their engrossing occupations.

"Miss Ormatroyd, I believe," said the portly Mixson, looking up at the tall slight figure. "You have a letter for me from Waterson of Melbourne. They advised me of it last mail."

The full sonorous tones of his voice with its mellow Irish accent seemed to fill the small room as his own importance filled it. He always "posed" to his authors. He sat at this official desk with his court beyond and around him, and from time to time broke off the conversation with his visitors to give orders or directions to his staff—thereby confusing or impressing the one, and amusing the other, to whom "the governor's dodges" were a constant source of marvel. In the parlance of the said "staff," "you never could tell what the old boy would be up to."

Having directed his present visitor to take a seat he proceeded to read her letter of introduction, looking off every now and then to give directions, or ask such questions as—"Jones, is that agreement made out for Titherson?"—or, "Smith, send Pepperbox his statement, and make out cheque for balance"—or, "Potts, what about the cheap edition of Miss Pratt's novel? Have we got specimen copy from the printers?"

These and other remarks relating to "proofs," "copy," "plates," and advertisements interlarded his perusal of the letter, and his remarks to the bearer.

"I'm a busy man, you see, Miss Ormatroyd . . . Um—um—um. Yes, very satisfactory. But then colonial reputation—um—um—um. Well, now, what can I do for you? Got another novel ready, I suppose?"

"Yes," said the girl quietly; "I sent it you three weeks ago. I came to inquire whether you had decided about it yet?"

"Three weeks? . . . Pooh! my dear girl, we don't get the reader's opinion for six, or even more. What's the name of it, by the way?"

"'A Dream and its Ending,'" said the young author, colouring at the bold glance, and free and easy manner of the great man.

"Bad title to begin with—but, of course, you could change that. So much is in a title . . . everything, in fact. Why, Miss Murderall—the celebrated Miss Murderall, you know, whose publishers we are—thinks nothing of changing a title twenty times to get a good one. Yours would never do—too mawkish. The public like a good, rattling, rousing one. However—Jones, look up your ledger. See who's got MS. of 'The Ending of a

Dream.' Wasn't that it? No? 'A Dream and its Ending,' by —— What name, Miss Ormatroyd? I didn't catch it."

"My *nom de plume* is Heron Raye," the girl answered, colouring again. The blue eyes, so keen to notice women's attractions, noted how that bright flush lit up the dark sad face and lovely eyes, in whose quiet depths there lurked so strange a pathos.

"By Heron Raye," Mr. Mixson repeated in his loud authoritative manner. "What makes you take a *nom de plume*?" he asked the girl. "Real names are so much better. And yours is such a pretty name—not as pretty, though, as the eyes of its owner," he added with a wink.

The red blood flushed to the girl's brow. She felt somewhat indignant at the personal familiarity of the great man, to whom her visit was purely a matter of business.

Meanwhile the clerk, having rapidly fluttered the leaves of his ledger, announced, "'A Dream and its Ending;' author, Heron Raye; MS. 3 vol. novel. Being read by Arthur Marsh; sent October 10th."

"That will do," said the great Mixson. "You see," he added, turning to his visitor, "we have not yet received the reader's report. We shall communicate with you as soon as we get it."

The girl sighed. "It seems a long time to wait," she said disappointedly.

"Long!" exclaimed Mr. Mixson. "My dear young lady, that remark betrays great inexperience. Long! Why, some authors think nothing of waiting for months for our decision on their books."

"There is one more question I wish to ask," said the young authoress. "As my first book was so successful, would you republish it in a cheaper form for me, so as to bring it within reach of the buying public? I see you bring out so many cheap editions of books."

The great man looked at her as if she were a natural curiosity. Then he leant back in his chair, and gave vent to a burst of hearty laughter.

"Really, Miss Ormatroyd, you are the most innocent author I've ever come across. Bring out a cheap edition of *one* book! One! My dear child, wait till you've written a dozen, and then ask me to do that. We have given up issuing a cheap edition of

an author until we've a good round number of his books as our own copyright. And then they must have been *popular*. By popular I mean books that every one knows, and every one talks about. Now yours has scarcely been heard of here at all, and a success in the Colonies is not a success in England by any means. Of course, if you liked to try the venture yourself we would give you the benefit of our name and place it with the trade. But you would have to stand the expense and run the risk of loss."

"How much would it cost?" asked the girl timidly.

"Um—um . . ." He drew a sheet of paper towards him and began to make some calculations. "Say 3000 copies—a smaller edition at 2s. won't pay at all . . . um—paper, printing, binding, advertising, use of name . . . um. Well, it would run you into about £200—perhaps more."

"Two hundred pounds!" exclaimed the girl. "Oh, I couldn't possibly afford that."

"I suppose not," said the great man, his experience of authors not being that of a class of beings who could afford what he grandiloquently described as "cost of production." "That is why you authors amuse me so," he went on in a hard strident voice for the benefit of his satellites. "You come to *us*—to a firm of publishers—and expect we will lay out large sums of money on *you* at our own risk. We have nothing to do but put our hands in our pockets, and float you in the book market as a speculation of which we are to bear the loss, and you expect all the profits. As a class you have afforded me unbounded amusement. You are so thoroughly unpractical, and have such an exalted opinion of the value of your own wares."

The hot hurt flush on the girl's face burned deeper and deeper as she listened to these frank and agreeable truths.

"I . . . I have no exalted opinion of the merits of my book," she said quietly. "But the publishers in Melbourne assured me it was a genuine success for a first effort, and they suggested that in a cheaper form it would go well in England."

"Oh, rubbish and nonsense!" was the courteous rejoinder. "If they had considered it worth re-issuing in cheap form they would have done it themselves. Have you retained the copyright?" he asked suddenly.

"Yes; otherwise I could not have made such a proposition."

"Um! Of course—of course; I know that. Well, you can only wait and see how your next venture turns out. If it should be a success, I might be inclined to make you an offer for copyright of both books. I would then hold them over, and bring them out later on in a popular edition when there was sufficient to pay the expense. One alone is quite useless. I never introduce an author to the buying public who hasn't at least six books to dispose of."

"And if the reader's opinion of the new novel is favourable," said the girl, "what terms would you be likely to offer for that?"

"If the report was *very* favourable," said the great man thoughtfully, "we might be inclined to produce it at our own risk and cost, allowing you a half-share of the profits when we had deducted the said costs. Mind, I only say *might*. It is quite exceptional for our firm to produce a book by an unknown author unless they pay down a sum sufficient to cover the risk. By the way, why have you changed the name you first wrote under? By doing so you lose the advantage of whatever success you made."

"I know," said the girl faintly. "But I—I have a special reason for doing so. I want to face the English public on my own merits."

The great Mixson laughed contemptuously. "That's another dream you poor devils of authors like to indulge in. I can assure you the waking is not always pleasant. You are a very inexperienced and rather foolish young lady, Miss Ormatroyd. Now, don't be above taking a bit of advice. There's not many people in my position would give it. As a rule, we let authors buy their experience at our profit. You see I am very frank with you; but I'd like to stand your friend. I'm always sorry for a young, pretty girl who rushes headlong into literature with no more ability, or knowledge of the matter, than a child in the nursery. The market is flooded to repletion with women writers. Every school miss thinks she can evolve a three-volume novel out of her bread-and-butter imagination, and sublime inexperience. Now, you're very young, I can see; and I wouldn't give much for your knowledge of the world or of life. The fact of your being a colonial might lend something of novelty to your writing or your scenic background; but a book wants more than that. It wants character, thought, realism, force. You can't put these

things into it when you yourself don't know what they mean. That's why men have the best of it. They at least *know* what they're writing about. Women only imagine, or copy. Now, no doubt you think your book very fine, and, perhaps, you've read bits of it to friends, and they agreed with you ; but publishers and critics are very hard to please. The former look to their profits, the latter to your faults—*merit* they never allow. A publisher can't afford to help an author at a loss to himself. His whole business would fall to the ground. Do you suppose I could have attained my present position if I hadn't been very careful that my profits were safe? Of course, when I have recognized genuine talent—as in the case of Miss Murderall—I've done everything in my power to advance it." (Here Sheba caught sight of the head clerk giving a significant wink to one of his *confrères*.) "That lady is an example to all feminine authors, and a proof of what an enterprising publisher can do. Why, her fame at the present moment is simply colossal. The public worship her. No house is complete without a book, or set of books of hers in its library."

"That is what her advertisements always say," remarked Sheba quietly. "But don't you think her writing is a little monotonous? I mean that in every book the plot turns on the same incident—you can tell so easily how it will end."

The chief clerk at this juncture became almost apoplectic in his attempts to stifle his laughter. It was quite evident that this frank young critic had not the least suspicion that her remarks were addressed to the lawful lord and master of the lady in question.

"You know nothing about the secrets of popularity, that's quite certain," he said brusquely. "You'll have to learn that also in time—and really, young lady, it's rather a bold proceeding for an author of no standing at all, to attempt to criticize one whose fame is a household word. Miss Murderall has fought her way nobly to the front rank of novelists, and success has crowned her efforts. You should try to follow her example—not find fault with her mode of work."

"I did not find fault. I only gave it as my opinion that the same incident applied in so many cases lacked any great originality of invention. I should hate to write two books alike, leave alone twenty."

"Then I'm afraid you'll never be a success," said the great man. "If once the British public like a thing, they can't have too much of it. Do you suppose that Sims Reeves could have gone on singing 'My Pretty Jane' and 'Tom Bowling' for nearly twenty years if it hadn't been for that national—peculiarity?"

The girl smiled. "Well," she said, "if my new novel should be a success, I promise I'll try and keep on repeating it. It certainly would save a great deal of trouble."

She rose then, thinking the interview had lasted long enough, though it had resulted in nothing definite.

"How long do you think I shall have to wait before—before I hear the reader's report?" she asked somewhat anxiously.

"Oh, in another two or three weeks," said Mr. Mixson. "You had better give me a call here about that time. I hope I'll have some good news for you. But you must place yourself in my hands and abide by my advice."

"I would gladly do that," said the girl humbly. "But I must keep my independence as far as my title, and my *nom de plume* are concerned. I have a very special reason for wishing this book to be in no way associated with the other."

"Oh, we'll see about that later on; time enough for it, Miss Ormatroyd—time enough. Well, good afternoon. I hope you won't get lost in the fog. Shall I send for a cab?"

"No thank you," said the girl, flushing deeply with the remembrance of a very scantily-filled purse that would only run to "bus fares." And with a hurried bow she left the office and descended the dingy staircase once more.

CHAPTER II.

IN "NEW JERUSALEM."

FOG and darkness still reigned supreme as Sheba Ormatroyd took her way through the narrow lane into the lamp-lit thoroughfare beyond, in search of an omnibus that would take her to the unfashionable region of Maida Vale.

She had lived there for a year.

A great deal had happened since that tragic episode of her life which had brought her back to her mother's side, and opened

afresh that existence of martyrdom which was inseparable from such an event. Whether it was her care and nursing, or whether the doctors had been mistaken, certain it is that Mrs. Levison began to recover from her mysterious complaint—though still keeping to the *rôle* of a chronic invalid.

About a year after Sheba's return home, Mr. Levison suddenly died. The shock to his wife might have been a very severe one, had it not been mercifully tempered by the discovery of a piece of injustice which dried the widow's tears by force of indignation. For David Levison was not nearly so wealthy a man as had been supposed, and had considerably lessened that wealth by a series of unfortunate speculations. Added to this he left the bulk of his money to his daughter Dolly, with simply an annuity of £300 a year to his wife and a request that the child should be taken to England, and placed under the charge of some relatives there to be educated.

This want of confidence in his wife naturally wounded her pride as well as her affection, and the result was a lengthy correspondence with those relatives, which ended in a suggestion on their part that she should bring the child to England and stay with her under their roof till some definite arrangements could be made.

The announcement of a visit to England struck Sheba with a sort of terror. She feared above all things a meeting with Paul. It had always seemed to her that the world was scarcely wide enough to keep them apart, and now the distance was narrowing day by day.

It was vain, however, to try and turn Mrs. Levison from her determination. That worthy lady had made up her mind that henceforth her duty was to stick to Dolly, to make herself necessary to her, and thus win a secondhand profit from that amiable young creature's advantages. She had been shamefully treated, but she would not visit that wrong on her innocent step-daughter. She prepared to win her heart and make herself necessary to her comfort by means of judicious flattery, and that system of "spoiling" which is implied by giving a child its own way.

The rich Jewish relatives were a sister and brother-in-law of David Levison. The lady had married a cigar merchant who had risen step by step to affluence and importance. They had only one child—a son—who was creditably following in his

father's footsteps, and as Mrs. Levy had long and ardently desired a daughter, she was not at all unwilling to receive her youthful niece under her roof.

Matters being at last arranged, Mrs. Levison and the two girls set sail for the old country, and arrived there in that dreariest of dreary months—November. They proceeded from Liverpool to London, and were there met and conducted to the abode of the Matthew Levys' with a warmth of welcome and a magnificent hospitality that astonished and delighted the widow. To Sheba, who had never been able to conquer her prejudice against the sons and daughters of the Hebrew race, the new friends and the new domicile were as distasteful as they well could be. She found herself in that region of the Semitic persuasion which has been—not inaptly—termed “The New Jerusalem.”

Almost every house possessed a Jewish tenant. The rivalry of riches was the only rivalry they held of any account. The women vied with each other in gorgeousness of apparelling, and the multitude of jewels, and the ostentatious display at their entertainments. The men were content to furnish their houses showily, and adorn their spouses, with a due regard to their own advantage by so doing.

All good Jewish husbands consider it necessary that their wives should be an advertisement of their wealth—and the wives quite agree with them.

Mrs. Levison was supposed to be “looking about” for a suitable residence, and merely staying as a visitor with the Matthew Levys during this process. She soon discovered, with the wisdom of unselfishness, that however far £300 a year might stretch in the colonies, its powers are not equally elastic in the mother country. She declared it impossible to find a house in any decent neighbourhood, whose rent and accommodation were alike suitable to her means. Added to this, she, while the search was in progress, was living in a luxurious and well-appointed household. The fact of doing so made the difficulty of that search far greater, as she was in the possession of every comfort, and was treated quite like one of the family.

Dolly did not go to school, but had masters for everything at her aunt's residence, and was petted and spoiled considerably by the household. Matthew Levy—with that eye to the future which is so admirable a possession—saw in the young heiress a

most suitable match for his only son, and was inclined to look sharply after his interests as represented by the charge and care of that important little person. It was somewhat tiresome that the said son—a short, ill-bred, and extremely ugly youth—should have allowed his affections to stray from so eligible a match into the direction of Sheba Ormatroyd—the penniless, proud, and unpopular step-sister. But all the family and friends who were interested in the matter took a hopeful view of young Benjamin's fancy, and were certain that it would not last. The inherited common-sense of many generations would surely assert itself also in this branch, and lead him to acknowledge that the value of shekels far exceeded the value of mere beauty.

After a few months' residence among these distasteful surroundings, Sheba Ormatroyd felt the old longing for work and independence springing up fresh and strong as of old. She longed to be away from these people—to taste the bread of liberty—to lead the old free life that had held for her mind and senses so deep a charm. Unable to convince her mother that she had long out-stayed the prescribed limits of her invitation, and chafing at the idleness and ostentation around her, as she had chafed at the same surroundings in her step-father's house, Sheba resolved to set to work on her own account. For this purpose she began to write a new book. It was no easy task, considering that much of her time had to be spent in the service of a fretful invalid. However, she managed to do it, though she was obliged to take her mother into her confidence, so as to excuse her persistent absence at the festivities of Maida Vale. Even in their own house she seldom appeared, and Mrs. Levison gave out that her daughter was a strange, unsocial character, and quite taken up with study and literary work, for which she had always had a taste. This announcement only confirmed the opinion already pronounced on the girl by the Levys, and their numerous friends. Book-writing, as they all knew, was an unprofitable pursuit. No one of their race ever wasted their time on it, unless there was some influence in the background to push their works into notice. The shrewdness and intellect of the Jew lends itself to more profitable ways of making money, than that brain labour which has so poor a market. To publish books, or advance journalism, or form companies for the sale of Christmas cards, are enterprises not quite unworthy of Semitic talent, but rare indeed are the cases

where that talent has displayed itself in the arena of literature *par et simple*. Even Disraeli had the wisdom to plough in other fields beside that one whose soil is chiefly distinguished by uncertainty. So when Sheba withdrew more and more from the card-parties, the lavish dinners and suppers and dances with which the various stars in the firmament of "New Jerusalem" dazzled their fraternity, people soon forgot her existence, and ceased to question her mother about her.

The Matthew Levys considered her a fool ; and disliked her cold, proud air, and that chilling disdain of the ostentation and wealth about her, which, to them, signified so much. Again, as in her childish days, was Sheba Ormatroyd destined to be misunderstood and disliked. Again, as in that time before love had broken up the frozen channels of her nature, did that nature withdraw within itself—feed on its own misery, and long vainly for sympathy or comprehension.

The one outlet for her mind—the one relief to all those pent-up feelings—was her writing. Dearly as she had loved it before, that love amounted almost to a passion now. She would have sacrificed wealth, comfort, popularity—indeed, almost everything in life—for the ability to utilize that one talent—the power to give herself up to it, and devote energy and time and study to its pursuit. But she was hampered and controlled by a thousand things, whose very triviality rendered them the more trying.

It is curious to note how seldom the environments of genius are suitable or sympathetic. The artist, the musician, the author, the actor, rarely, if ever, find themselves in a congenial atmosphere, or with the means and time at their disposal which art demands, and has every right to demand.

Fate seems to derive a malicious satisfaction in placing every possible obstacle and impediment in the way of these dreamers, as if desirous to prove that the Ideal is not a life worth struggling for, and that it is best to remain content with the commonplace and prosaic views of ordinary folk.

Heredity and accident have alike warred against this fate, and will doubtless war against it for all time ; but the conqueror has all the suffering, and the conquest, when obtained, seems scarcely worth the pain and fatigues of the battle.

Sheba had only just begun the warfare. Her experience of to-day was discouraging, but her conviction of her own powers was

not yet annihilated, even by such opinions as those delivered by the great Mixson.

The simplicity and force of her nature were strangely blended, and the passion and originality which had made her first book so successful had found surer ground to work upon in the second.

It seemed impossible to her that the book should be refused, and, once published, she felt certain that its story would find many hearts to echo its truth, and feel its pathos.

The feeling of power in herself was a feeling quite apart from any feminine vanity. The nightingale *feels* the sweetness of its song. The roses surely know the secret of their scent. So in the human heart there is a hidden song—a subtle scent—of which that heart is conscious, and whose power it cannot fail to recognize.

The pale, weary girl, seated in the dingy omnibus that toiled westwards, was conscious that she possessed this power—that it was at once imperative and uncontrollable. Its demands were only to be appeased by concession.

She would have opened her heart and devoted her life to these demands had circumstances permitted. But she could only struggle and hope—and wait.

More sad and dispirited than she had felt for long, Sheba Ormatroyd sat in a corner of the crowded vehicle, looking out at the dreary fog, and going over and over again the particulars of that interview with the publisher.

She had hoped so much for this book. She had seen in its success a way of supplementing her mother's income, and removing her from her present dependent and humiliating life. But the Great Authority, whose voice still echoed in her ear, had dashed all these hopes to the ground.

Even if her book was accepted, the remuneration promised was very poor—not even a sum of ready money; and her imagination had foolishly wandered into a cheque of three figures at least. She wished she had some one to consult or speak to—some one well known in literature, who might give her advice or help. But she knew no such person, and into the circle of the Levys' acquaintance any one who was connected with art or literature never intruded. They bought their music as they hired their waiters and supper decorations, and treated the performers very little better.

The melancholy day and the melancholy journey to Maida

Vale did not do much to raise the girl's drooping spirits, and when she reached the big imposing house, which to her only represented a prison, she both looked and felt intensely miserable.

The mansion was *en fête*. There was to be a party that evening—one of those large card parties, supplemented by a magnificent supper, such as Mrs. Matthew Levy delighted in giving, and for which her luck at solo whist often repaid her. Sheba passed through the hall, where the servants were bustling about amongst pedestals, and statues, and plants, and went slowly up the staircase, with its crimson carpeting and decorated walls. Everything in the house was for show, and the whole effect was tasteless and comfortless in the extreme. The gilding and decoration, the soft carpets, the rich lace curtains, the glaring satin of the couches and chairs, the china so lavishly displayed on cabinets and mantelpieces, the clocks and pictures and statuettes, all spoke the same tale—all seemed entreating relief from their cold and decorative nakedness—all looked as if “on view” for a sale, or an exhibition.

Sheba went past the first landing, where open doors revealed bed and dressing rooms in regal *toilettes* of satin and lace that were being arranged for the evening, for Mrs. Levy had full-dress costumes for her beds and dressing-tables, even as she had them for her own portly person. Passing up a second staircase, the girl entered a good-sized room, more simply, though quite as tastelessly, furnished as those below. A bright fire burned in the grate. The gas was lit, and at a small tea-table, drawn close to the fire, sat Mrs. Levison and her hostess. Dolly had established herself in a low chair, and was engaged in the perusal of a French novel. She had carefully removed the flaring and somewhat *risqué*-looking cover, and informed her step-mother that it was a school-book.

They all looked up as Sheba entered.

“Where on earth have you been? How could you have stayed out so long in this dreadful fog?” exclaimed Mrs. Levison.

“I had some business to attend to,” said Sheba. “I told you so this morning, mother.”

“Business!” said Mrs. Levy—as she carefully creamed and sugared her tea—“young ladies shouldn’t know anything about business. Were you in the City? I wonder you like to go about by yourself.”

"Oh, Sheba always did do funny things," said Dolly, glancing up from her book "She never was like any one else, and never will be. Was it about your writing you went?" she added.

"Yes," said Sheba, flushing slightly.

"Will any one buy it?" asked Mrs. Levison languidly. "I can hardly believe it possible that you will ever be an authoress, my dear. I'm sure you haven't the talent for it."

"Oh, it doesn't want much talent," said Dolly, shutting up her novel, and contriving to push it under a heap of lesson books. She feared Sheba's superior knowledge of the French language, and did not want her treasure confiscated until she had satisfactorily assured herself that the lovely heroine was really in love with her own stepson—as was vaguely conveyed. "Any one can write a book who has a little knowledge of how to put sentences together, and throws in a dash of spice—or realism—or impropriety."

"My dear child!" remonstrated her aunt; "you mustn't say such things. It's not proper for a young lady."

"She is so clever," said Mrs. Levison, gazing fondly at the little sharp face and bold blue eyes of the young heiress. "I should never be surprised at anything she did."

Dolly gave a little grin of satisfaction as she crossed over to the tea-table for some tea. No one thought of offering any to Sheba.

"However clever I was," said Dolly, with a glance at the tall figure and tired face of her step-sister, "I wouldn't be so foolish as you are, Sheba, giving up all the best part of your time to writing books, when you might enjoy yourself. Who wants novels? They're always stupid if they're good, and girls aren't allowed to read them if they're improper; and men never read them at all!"

"Don't judge the world at large by the few specimens you have met, Dolly," said Sheba. "May I have some tea?" she added, going up to the table.

"Certainly. Do you mind pouring it out for yourself?" said Mrs. Levy languidly; "I'm very fatigued—I've had so much to do. It never does to leave everything to servants when one gives a party."

"I can come down to-night, can't I, Aunt Rachel?" said Dolly quickly. "I want to wear my pink dress. I've never put it on yet."

Mrs. Levy looked at the fair flushed face and untidy hair of her niece. Dolly Levison never believed in making the best of her personal attractions while in the bosom of her family, though she would spend hours in dressing herself up for one of these parties.

"You may come down to the drawing-room, my dear, for an hour or so," she said, "but you are too young to be really 'out.'"

The expression on Sheba's face was more scornful than any spoken words.

"Is it worth while spending three hours over dressing yourself, in order to appear in the drawing-room for—one?" she said.

Dolly tossed her untidy cloud of hair—her eyes flashed indignantly.

"It is worth while to me," she said pertly. "But then I'm not a genius."

"Is Sheba supposed to be one?" asked Mrs. Levy, looking at the girl with cold curiosity.

"Oh, she thinks she is," said her mother pettishly. "However, that remains to be seen. You haven't told us, Sheba, if your book has been accepted, or not?"

"I am to hear definitely in a week or two," the girl answered, colouring a little at the contemptuous stare with which Mrs. Levy was regarding her.

"So you had your journey for nothing?"

"No," Sheba answered quietly; "I received some excellent advice on the subject of literature—its market value, its appreciation, and its—utility. Dolly is perfectly right. One wonders why books are written, or brains given to write them, when one remembers—who reads them."

(*To be continued.*)

"With the Monks of St. Bernard."

By EMILIA SERGISON.

SO romantic an interest has always attached itself to the name of St. Bernard, that I think a short account of one of many visits to his heroic followers cannot but prove interesting to your readers who may not have like opportunities themselves.

It was at the close of a sultry day in July that a train bearing its freight of tourists drew sleepily up at the station of Martigny, in the Rhone Valley. On the platform stood two tall dignified ecclesiastics, whose faces lit up with smiles of welcome on seeing us among its passengers.

Leaving our luggage to follow, we strolled over the fields, under the fruit trees, rejoicing to breathe the sweet-scented air after the stuffy confinement of a long railway journey, and soon reached the Priory, where the benign and venerable old Prior, supported by Joséphine and Marie, his cook and housemaid, stood waiting to receive us. What greetings! what handshakings! People who live in the whirl of society cannot picture the pleasure it gives such simple folk to receive their friends after long intervals—how much there is to hear—how much to tell!

Dinner awaited us, and after it was over we adjourned to the garden, where we were joined by the monks from the Maison St. Bernard opposite, and drank tea and chatted, while those of the sterner sex enjoyed their cigarettes, till the Prior reminded us how early the church bell would wake us, and recommended us to profit by the hours of quiet at our disposal.

Let me here explain that it is only in England that the members of this community are called monks, and that they do *not* dress in the style depicted in the picture-books of our childhood, and even by Landseer in his celebrated picture. They call themselves "Religious," or Fathers of St. Bernard, and all bear the appellation of Chanoines Reguliers; they are not cloistered either, as many imagine. The monastery itself, instituted primarily for purposes of hospitality, is also a theological college,

where young priests are trained, and from whence clergy are supplied to minister in the parishes belonging to the order, which consists of about forty-two priests, besides novices and lay brethren.

Their dress is a plain black cassock, tied round the waist by a cincture or cord, and a white tape or rochet over the shoulders shows that they belong to the order of St. Augustine. Elsewhere the rochet of the same order is a white cape, but for convenience sake they were privileged by some Pope in bygone ages to reduce theirs to a mere cord. Black stockings, shoes and buckles, and beaver hats complete their costume. Their scrupulous cleanliness forms a pleasing contrast to that of the secular priests one meets, who do *not* consider cleanliness within a hundred miles of godliness.

Martigny is one of the eleven parishes served by them. The Priory, a comfortable, roomy house, accommodates the Prior and his staff, which generally consists of a recteur and one or perhaps two vicaires ; it adjoins the church, a fine ancient building, somewhat in want of repair, but possessing a good peal of bells, which play innumerable tunes, and a magnificent organ, whose organist also fills the important post of station-master.

Opposite the Priory stands the House of St. Bernard, in which resides the *Prévôt*, or head of the Order, who is, in point of fact, their Bishop, as he is under no jurisdiction but that of the Holy See. His violet dress is completed by a massive gold chain and cross. His appearance is imposing, but he is a most kindly, genial old gentleman, full of courtesy and attentions to his guests, and much beloved by every one of his monks. Here also live those monks whose health has been entirely ruined by the rigorous climate at the Hospice, and who creep down to Martigny while still quite young, either to die or to drag through years of suffering, till God calls them to wear the crown they have so bravely earned. Few can stay in those glacial regions for more than nine years, though some hardier ones can manage fifteen, and it is the exception to meet a man over thirty years of age up there, except on a temporary visit. It is, however, a terrible sorrow to leave the Hospice, whether for sickness, or through being appointed to any post below ; their thoughts and hopes all point to going back some day, and they talk of the long years spent there as the happiest in their lives—indeed, so strong is their love

for the place, that when ill, the medicine they most pine for is a decoction made from the lichen to be found in the neighbourhood. The Procureur also lives there. His business is to manage their farms in Italy and Switzerland, to regulate the expenditure at the two Hospices at St. Bernard and the Simplon, to attend to the breed of dogs, and such like matters.

The present Procureur is a man of very striking presence, tall and commanding, whose great wish in life was to retire from the world and devote himself to his religious duties, and, in addition, to pursue the sciences of botany and mineralogy, which, with music, are his hobbies. For some time fortune favoured him, as he was appointed Clavendier (keeper of the keys—housekeeper, in fact) at the Simplon, where his brother was Prior. The latter would often do his work for him, to allow him time for the long expeditions he loved to make ; but unfortunately the Procureur at Martigny fell ill, and ultimately died. He so urgently entreated that this one, and no other, might nurse him, that he was sent for, and having proved his wonderful business capacities, he is retained there, and though it is only a temporary appointment, he fears it will end in becoming a permanent one.

The day after our arrival we received a letter from the Prior up at the Hospice, suggesting that we should remain a few days longer at Martigny, as a great Conférence was to take place there at the end of the week, when we should meet many old friends whom otherwise we might not see at all, and altogether enjoy ourselves, more than if we went at once.

To this we had no objection, as we had many friends in the neighbourhood we wished to see, and excursions which the beautiful sunny weather tempted us to make. Peasant proprietorship being a subject much under discussion in England, we were interested in seeing how it worked among our friends in those districts. From all, almost without exception, we heard the same story, namely, that it entailed ruin and poverty on the owners who had not sufficient capital to farm, and who are obliged by a bad season to have recourse to the Jews, who advance them money at exorbitant interest ; indeed, the hold the Jews have over the people of Switzerland is becoming very serious, and they attribute it to small holdings, large families, and very little capital to work on.

At Martigny we led the quietest of lives. Mass at five o'clock, breakfast afterwards, which we and the Prior generally had by

ourselves, the Recteur being occupied in the school or hospital, and the Vicaire having been probably sent for to visit some sick or dying person over the mountains. Whilst they were busy with their good works, we read, wrote, or played on the organ in the church ; sometimes we strolled down to one of the big hotels to have a look at the English papers and see the arrivals, Martigny being the principal starting point for Chamounix and other places of interest. Of course there was to be found the good-natured American, full of noisy anxiety to see Mount *Blank* and a *glazier!* the fussy English pater and mater-familias, with children of all ages, and boxes of all sizes, which were expected to arrive at the highest altitudes ; the "lovable English clergyman," as Mark Twain calls him, with his one flannel shirt, looking unshaven and unwashed, and very much as he would *not* have liked his parishioners at home to see him. Then there was the usual German family, terribly afraid of an open window, and wrapping their table-napkins round their necks if any unwary waiter left the door open for two seconds.

Certainly to those fond of studying human nature, a large hotel in the season is an immense field for instruction and amusement.

After our midday meal in the refectory, the afternoon was generally devoted to some long excursion to a new point of view, or, if the monks were too busy to go far, we would wend our way to some village in the neighbourhood, and drink tea with the curé, returning in time for supper and prayers.

One delightful expedition was to Chamounix, under the guidance of the curé of Trient, a thorough mountaineer, and an excellent pilot over snow. A very good hotel afforded us accommodation, whilst the archpriest (a Frenchman) entertained the monks. Montanvert, the Mer de Glace, &c., were included in our programme, and we enjoyed it all the more from being able to dispense with the company of hired guides.

Another day the Bishop of St. Maurice most kindly invited us to see the treasures of his beautiful old abbey. We were entertained at dinner by the President of the Commune and his wife and pretty daughters ; a regular banquet was provided, splendid trout from the Rhone of extraordinary dimensions being one among many delicacies.

The Bishop and his clergy received us at the church, and after inspecting the curious old treasures, dating from the time of

Charlemagne, we were conducted to the Bishop's apartments, where he showed us some very beautiful old furniture and tapestry which must have been there for many centuries ; after which the gentlemen were shown parts of the abbey forbidden to ladies. The Bishop is a tall, ascetic-looking man. A new mitre had just been presented to him by his clergy, and was shown with much gratification.

The monks of St. Maurice are of the same order as those of St. Bernard, and wear the same dress. In the afternoon they took us to see a wonderful subterranean passage with a lake at the end, called the Grotte des Fées, and afterwards escorted us to the station, which we did not reach till quite dark.

That evening, having settled to start early next day for the Hospice, we went round and arranged with an old friend, Jean François, to hire his conveyance as far as the road went.

The sun rose brightly, and after a very early breakfast, we took leave of the Prior, and, escorted by the Recteur and Vicaire, started on our way. The road is good, having been made by Napoleon, but our springs were bad. However, little discomforts did not affect us, as our minds were made up for enjoyment ; besides which, we walked the greater part of the way. Our progress was necessarily slow, as all the curés in the villages we passed had to be visited, and they are all far too hospitable to allow any old friend to depart unrefreshed. Many of them joined us *en route* for the Conférence, which all are bound to attend if able.

At Orsières, where we halted to rest the steeds, we were grieved to hear of the sad death of the Vicaire, who on our last visit had been one of the kindest in welcoming us, and showing us his wonderful establishment of bees and curious hives invented by himself—now all looking so deserted without him. There had been an epidemic of typhoid in the parish, during which he had nursed the sick with unwearied care, but at last had succumbed himself. Shortly before, a new burial-ground had been opened, and he was one of the first to be laid in it.

At the Cantine de Proz, about twenty miles from Martigny, the road ceases, and the remaining nine miles can be done either on horseback or on foot, which is infinitely preferable. Here we were met by a band of novices, who had come down with wine and refreshment to cheer us on our way. They also brought the

pleasant news that the Prior himself had come to meet us, and was preparing tea at a farm about a mile on, where, sure enough, we found him ; with *such* bowls of yellow cream, and *such* bread and butter !

Never was there a merrier party ; some had not met for months, some were brothers or old friends whom they rejoiced to see, so the sun was nearly setting before we left our stone table and wooden bowls.

One of our party was a child, in whom the monks have taken the greatest interest ever since she was quite a little girl, and knowing her love for animals, they had brought all the dogs to escort her up ! They never tire of teasing her, and making her sing to them, teaching her to join in their quaint Swiss part songs. The dreary rocks rang with laughter, as she and the young novices sped along, especially when her only hat was blown by a gust of wind into the rapid torrent, and only rescued by the united efforts of boys and dogs !

It is really astonishing to see the chamois-like agility with which, notwithstanding the encumbrance of a heavy cassock, they contrive to climb the most precipitous rocks, or slide down the frozen snow. The dogs, who seem to have discovered the secret of tobogganing, lay themselves out flat and follow their masters down slides in a manner that would excite the envy of any schoolboy !

These faithful dogs invariably escorted us on our walks, and one called Pluto used to evince the greatest anxiety if any of the party ventured on to what he knew to be dangerous places, seizing their clothes and pulling them back.

Further on the scenery becomes sombre and terrible, no trace of vegetation, bare inhospitable rock on every side, while the rapid Dranse, glad to leave its icy bed, rushes down to a more genial clime.

It is here that one begins to realize fully the noble self-devotion of these heroic men, who spend the best part of their lives in this gruesome place, which is the highest winter habitation in the Alps.

Especially in this age of change and excitement and irreligion is one impressed with the fact that since the Order and the Hospice were founded by St. Bernard de Menthon, more than 900 years ago, there should never have yet failed to exist the same

number of men, willing to spend nearly all their lives in the service of others, risking them in great dangers (for during the winter every monk and every dog has his beat, and *must* walk many miles and many hours a day in snow and tempest, on the chance of some traveller having been so ill-advised as to start across the mountain in impracticable weather), and ready at all times to shelter and welcome not only the rich and agreeable tourist, but the dirtiest and most forlorn tramp.

Some spend as many as fifteen long years up there, during nine months of which the temperature averages 15° Fahr.; the snow is deep, the travellers poor, and some idea may be formed of the life the monks lead. The tourist who is only there during the few summer weeks, little realizes what a winter means.

Would that some wealthy traveller could find it in his heart to present the Hospice with a complete system of hot-water pipes, which, without increasing the expenditure of fuel, would lessen the bitter cold of those long corridors and the chapel, where, at five o'clock a.m., summer and winter, monks and travellers assemble for mass. Instead of such generosity, it is a regrettable fact that human nature, when left to itself, is mean, and that the sum put into the alms-box in the chapel is quite incompatible with the number of travellers who demand hospitality.

It is true that the Hospice was founded for hospitality, but towards the poor traveller, not the wealthy tourist travelling for amusement, and it ought, therefore, to be a duty to put in the *tronc d'aumône* at least as much as the cost of residence at a moderate hotel. So far is this from being the case, that whereas in a year *from sixteen to twenty thousand guests are entertained, they barely contribute what would cover the expenses of one thousand.*

In summer the Clavendier has sometimes hard work to accommodate the throng. One night perhaps not more than half-a-dozen may arrive, and the next, with no warning, there may be more than a hundred. Now that there is a telegraph wire over the mountain (or there is going to be one), it would be only common courtesy that travellers should send word of their approach. Often the monks turn out of their own beds without a murmur, and as often as not their guests are quite rude to the tired-out Clavendier for not having put them up more comfortably.

The Hospice is a large ugly building, overlooking a lake, no trace of which, however, is visible in winter; snow covers it to a

depth of many feet. Half the house is shut off by large iron gates, which visitors are not allowed to pass. The Prior and his monks occupy one side ; on the other are the guests' rooms and large refectory, where the Clavendier receives them. In old days some female attendants were kept to wait on strangers, but the cold caused their hair to come off to such an extent that they declined to spoil their beauty, and the staff now consists of men only.

The dogs live below ; a fact very perceptible to one's nasal organs. As a rule, strangers are disappointed who expect to see finer animals than are to be seen in England, but the fact is the long-haired dogs would be of no use in snow, one reason being that it would stick about their eyes and freeze on, and so prevent their seeing.

A large kitchen and refectory for poorer wayfarers is under the cloistered part, and on the other side of the road stands a hospital or refuge from fire. Fortune favoured us the first night, as no one else arrived, so we put off dinner from six o'clock to eight o'clock, the cream having somewhat spoilt our appetites ! The Prior and some others honoured us with their company, after which we had music, a piano having been presented to them by the Prince of Wales in years gone by, and a harmonium by a number of ladies.

When the day of the chapitre arrived, the excitement was great. I can only liken it to a day during Oxford Commemoration on a small scale. The sun shone brightly as the chapel bell rang out for mass at five o'clock. The services were very bright, and all five altars kept occupied for some hours.

The Rector of Martigny sang mass at the High Altar, and notwithstanding his having a very strong sonorous voice in chanting, the rarefied air had the same effect on him that I have noticed before. The voice fell and fell continuously. This renders organ accompaniment very difficult, and becomes very exhausting to the singer.

The professor of theology acts as organist, and is very pleased if a new voluntary is occasionally sent to him. Years ago, when I first played at a service there, the blower was so lost in astonishment at seeing a lady play that he forgot to blow !

At 6.30 we breakfasted, and then sat outside in the sun, watching the arrivals, amongst the first being his reverence the *Prévôt*, looking rather exhausted with his very fatiguing journey.

He was accompanied by the Procureur, who kindly brought our letters up from Martigny. For two days they were all very busy discussing their affairs, having their accounts examined, audited, &c., and we saw but little of them till evening.

Strangers having arrived, they could not dine with us ; but after a stroll round the lake in the moonlight, we had tea together, a beverage they appreciate as much as we do. Their little friend had brought them various treasures, and no school children were ever more delighted with gifts off a Christmas tree ! Mackintoshes are very acceptable ; so also are razors, to faces that have to be shaved every morning in icy water ! Cakes of Pears' soap, good English knives, warm waistcoats and jerseys for the delicate-chested ones, sacred pictures to hang in their cells, books and music were all eagerly unpacked and admired !

The Hospice possesses an excellent library on the first floor, also a collection of ancient coins found in the neighbourhood. We had an opportunity of examining them with the professor of theology, who was not obliged to attend the Conférence. He is a man of very high intellect and culture, consequently always an agreeable companion. We accompanied him and some of the novices in the afternoon to the Chenalitte, from whence there is a grand view of Mont Rose ; and afterwards to a farm, where we had cream and biscuits, and listened to wonderful tales of rescues and hairbreadth escapes.

Indeed, on this very spot some heartrending scenes had taken place. On one occasion a party of Italian peasants arrived at the Hospice from Aosta. The snow fell so heavily for many days that the Prior could not let them go on. At last they came to him imploring permission, as the long delay would affect them very seriously. Most unwillingly the Prior went into the refectory, and asked if any were willing to run the terrible risk of guiding these men down. With one accord, all said "Yes." Six only, however, were selected—two priests and six lay brothers, and, with some dogs, they started.

After many delays and sickening anxiety they arrived safely at the Bourg St. Pierre, where, to their great vexation, they found another party waiting to go over to Italy, who hailed them with joy as guides. At first they firmly refused to allow them to accompany them, but finally yielded to their entreaties, and they started together.

In the meantime, great was the anxiety at the monastery, and deep the regret of those who had not been allowed to go. Hour after hour passed, and no sign of the wanderers. Snow was falling fast, and there arose one of those terrible *tourmentes* experienced in those heights, which drives rocks and posts before it. As evening came on, the Prior, with anxious heart, gave orders for a relief party to get ready. Armed with lamps and other necessaries, they assembled in the chapel, and knelt in silent prayer to God, who seems so very present during the strife of the elements. Then, after receiving the Prior's benediction, they started on their way. Progress was difficult, but after what seemed an age, one of the dogs gave notice of a find. Hurrying up, they discovered an Italian in a very exhausted condition, who told them they had started a party of eighteen, but he had lain there for many hours and seen no one. He recovered, and leaving one in charge of him, the rest continued the search. The next found was a priest, quite dead; then a lay brother and two peasants, who had evidently crushed him down; then another priest, not quite dead: his rescuers were just in time to hear his last confession. After exhausting labour, the whole party was discovered. Nine were dead, including two priests. The rest were conveyed to the very chalet where we were then sitting. Then these brave men started off to get stretchers. By this time the wind and snow had ceased; bright lights shone from the monastery windows, and the chapel bell, which had never stopped tolling, guided their weary footsteps and cheered their sad hearts.

It was, indeed, sorrowful news they brought, for the two monks who had lost their lives through the sudden descent of a heavy avalanche of snow and rock were among the most dearly loved of that happy and affectionate community. To this day they speak of that eventful time with bated breath, and one monk, still young, but whose hair was white, told me the horrors of that awful night had turned it so.

We were also told of the sad fate of one of their finest dogs. A traveller, lost in the snow and mist, was discovered by the sagacious animal, who bounded towards him, full of confidence that the man would recognize his good intentions. He, by some terrible mistake, thought it was a wolf coming to attack him, and lifting his gun, took a deliberate aim, and shot the noble creature

dead, to the bitter grief of his master, who was too far off to save his favourite.

Such tales suit the grandeur of these gloomy regions, but we were not suffered to dwell on them, for on our return to the monastery, we found a large number of guests had arrived. These were of all nationalities, and all equally fussy as to their accommodation, and the food likely to be set before them ! Being Friday, I am bound to say that the latter was not tempting, consisting of unsavoury dried fish, followed by rice and prunes. Any one going up on fast days, who is fastidious, would do well to take a private supply with him.

The favourite guests are the English, as being the most courteous, but, as a rule, they are so lamentably weak in French that conversation is necessarily somewhat stilted, and many were the quaint tales confided to us touching some of those who had sought hospitality at the Hospice. One lady on her arrival asked the Clavendier, "*Monsieur, combien êtes-vous de chiens ici ?*" I saw a twinkle in his eye as he gravely told her there were at that moment twelve dogs residing there, but his politeness was more severely taxed when, after a torrent of somewhat similar questions, she asked how the monks managed in deep snow to keep their *jambons* dry ! Their politeness and courtesy are invariable under trying circumstances, and they are an example (often much needed) to some of their guests.

These little malaprop sayings remind me of an old English cottager I went to see some years ago, and who asked me a good deal about our travels. Thinking it would interest her, I told her some stories about the monks of St. Bernard and their dogs, and the way in which they rescued people lost in the snow. She listened with the most rapt attention, and when I had finished she lifted up her hands and exclaimed, "Why, Lord a mussy, ma'am, wouldn't you a'most think they was *humans* ?" Poor old soul ! she thought it was monkeys I had been telling her about, and that each monkey walked out with his dog !

At last the time came to depart, and most truly sorry were we, as were also our kindly hosts. Little remembrances, in the shape of silver medals and crosses, containing views of the Hospice and chapel, were pressed into our hands, with many hopes that we would return ere long. Several of them accompanied us to the Cantine de Proz, where our faithful charioteer awaited us. We

were surprised to find he had a different carriage, and on being questioned he unfolded his tale of woe. Leaving his horse in the square at Orsières, while he went to refresh himself, some fowls desirous of sharing the steed's dinner appear to have frightened him into making a bolt of it, and the trap was smashed to pieces before he could be stopped. We made a mental note, on no account to allow him to leave his horse while *we* were in the carriage !

At Sembrancher the Vicaire left us to spend the night with his parents, while we and the Recteur returned to Martigny, where we found the Prior eager to hear all about our visit in general and the Conférence in particular. He was delighted that we had brought him a bottle of cream, a luxury not to be got in the valleys in summer, as all the cows go up to the higher pastures.

We remained at the Priory for some days to say good-bye to many friends, and then started for Lens, a village which had never before been visited by any strangers from any country, and no visit from royalty could have created greater excitement. On our way we stopped at Grange to lunch with the curé. Poor man ! we found him in a sad plight. Typhoid fever had visited his little parish, and every family had been attacked—sometimes it was the father and mother who had died, leaving all their little ones on his hands ; sometimes so many in one family were ill that they could not nurse each other. He himself had to be nurse, doctor, and priest in one, for most were too poor to call in a doctor all the way from Sion or Brieg, and by his devoted care of his flock he had worked himself nearly to death. When he saw us he burst into tears ; his nerves were quite unstrung, and it was so long since he had seen any one who looked well and cheerful. Before we left, he said our visit had put new life and hope into him, and of course we helped him as much as we could to buy necessaries for his sick, and felt thankful we had stopped on the chance of finding him at home. Since then an eminent organist most kindly gave an organ recital in our parish church on behalf of this most destitute village, and we were indeed rejoiced to send, as was the curé to receive, the sum of £50, the proceeds of the recital.

At the foot of the hill we found mules awaiting us, but a lady's saddle was an article unknown ! However, the monks deftly arranged shawls, &c., and walking beside us, managed to keep us on our slippery seats. It was very steep and very hot, but after

about three hours we came in sight of the great church, and greater Priory, surrounded by such an inadequate little village.

The whole population had turned out to see us, so we thought it more dignified to descend from our steeds, and walk in with our companions. Everybody wished to speak and to hear us speak ; few could speak anything but patois, but this was no obstacle to their wish to converse with us ! It was a comical scene. Our light summer dresses and parasols were a matter of interest to a population clad wholly in homespun, and the little girl's hair floating over her shoulders rather shocked the proprieties, inasmuch as long plaits are considered *the* thing in that region. At the Priory we were received by the Prior, who is one of the oldest of the community, as he is getting on for ninety, and one of his vicaires : the other was ill, and had gone to be cured at the baths of Leuk.

We were shown into the most sumptuous apartments, the sitting-room being about thirty feet long, hung with portraits of various popes and bishops, and our bed-rooms opening out of it on to a verandah, from whence we obtained an indescribably beautiful view of the Rhone Valley far below, and the snows above on the other side just tipped with pink by the setting sun.

Hastily tidying ourselves, we went down to the refectory, when, to our great amusement, we found the shutters had to be shut, as the crowd insisted on looking in to see how we ate ! After dinner we went to look at the church, and played on the untuneful organ, but found sitting in the cemetery gazing at the lovely view more to our taste.

Next day, while our hosts were busy, we went about among the people, who were all exceedingly hospitable, and we found it so impossible to avoid giving offence by refusing their many proffers of wine, that at last we had to take refuge in flight !

In this primitive place there is not an inn or a shop. A pedlar comes around occasionally and displays his wares on a stone slab in the middle of the only street. We gave away a lot of ornaments and photographs, with which they were very much pleased.

The same simple life is led here as at other priories. Mass at five o'clock, breakfast at six, then reading, writing, and a walk. Dinner at twelve o'clock, then a really long excursion, two hours of which were devoted to reading their office ; supper at six

o'clock, then a stroll and tea in honour of us, and music. One of their favourite airs is "Lead, kindly light," which we taught them to sing with us in parts, and which is dear to them for the composer's sake (Cardinal Newman).

It was very bright and sunny on the morning of our departure, and knowing how hot it would be in the valley, we started as soon as mass and breakfast were over. The same mules made their appearance, this time led by a comely damsels, but we preferred to walk as being less jolty. At St. Léonard we took the train for Leuk, intending to go over the Gemmi Pass to Thun. At Martigny they had all objected strongly to this plan, and seemed much impressed by the dangers of the pass ; on account, I suppose, of the sad fate of a French lady on her wedding tour, who, becoming giddy, slipped off her mule and fell down a tremendous precipice, since which sad occurrence no one is allowed to ride *down*. The Prior only became reconciled to the scheme on condition that his Recteur and Vicaire should see us safely over, to which we very gladly assented.

At the station of La Souste we were rapturously greeted by an individual in the telegraph department, whose son has been for some time a member of our household in England. As all his family had to interview us, it was hot and late before we got into the landau which was to convey us the ten miles that lie between the station and the baths of Leuk.

On our arrival we went to see the baths, which are curious. Men and women spend hours together in the water up to the neck, reading, playing dominoes, or drinking coffee on little floating tables. I cannot say it looked tempting, but they quite seemed to be enjoying themselves. In a passage on one side visitors are permitted to stand and watch the bathers, who keep a small bag at the end of a stick, which they hand up to receive alms for the poor. If any are so ill-advised as to refuse their charity, they are unmercifully flicked with water till they are obliged to give to escape a wetting ! Presently we were hailed by two St. Bernard monks who were undergoing the cure. We invited them to dine with us, but they had to be so very careful of cold and draughts that we did not repeat the invitation.

Leukerbad is a very hot place, quite surrounded by mountains, and except for the prospect of so soon parting with our kind guides, we were not sorry when the day came to leave.

We started at five o'clock in the morning, and had not gone far before we decided that our better plan would have been to wait till the evening, when that side of the mountain would be in shade ; as it was, the heat increased with every step, and as the path is cut out of sheer rock, there is not even a bush to give shelter.

An incident happened which rather amused us. A large party had started at the same time as ourselves, and amongst them was a young Lutheran minister, bubbling over with activity and zeal. The sight of our priestly companions was apparently too much for him, and rushing at us, he plunged incontinently into a discussion on religious topics, and especially upon his own views with regard to the Church of Rome. As the tirade was all delivered in most voluble German, it was lost entirely on the monks, who did not understand the language, and we who did were not in a condition to translate or argue in that tropical heat, even had we desired to do so. This was a keen disappointment, as he was not a French scholar, but suddenly he was inspired by a bright idea, and straight-way burst into somewhat halting Latin ! By this means he got answered ; not to say very quietly and firmly snubbed ! He was, however, a little trying, especially when he insisted on telling them the history of Abilard and Heloise, which they had never heard, and which would not have been edifying on this occasion. Just to show him we bore no malice, we invited him to join us at lunch at the top, and parted the best of friends.

The panorama at the Gemmi is one of the most striking in Switzerland, and we were glad to lie still on the grass looking at it till late in the afternoon, when with many regrets we parted, we to stroll leisurely down to Kandersteg, where we intended to sleep, and the monks to return to their Priory, which they did not reach till past midnight.

Reader, let me add one word. When you hear the Roman Catholic religion and its priests run down, as is so often done, by people who have gathered their ideas in Belgium, Spain, &c., tell them to go to some quiet corner of the earth such as I have been telling about, and there they will see, and feel the better for seeing and knowing these peaceful holy lives, passed far from the regions of politics and turmoil of earthly interests.

How many (or rather, how few) of the uncountable throng of people who take their pleasure abroad every year, *ever* take the trouble to inquire after the poor who dwell hidden behind the

monster hotel in which they are probably living luxuriously? And yet the poor and the sick abound there as elsewhere. How many ever think of asking the curé how they can best help him to tide over the hardships of the coming winter, when he will be the only one left to help, when visitors and hotel-keepers and all their satellites shall have departed to less wintry climates? The curé often sadly needs help, especially in times of sickness, for his annual stipend may be £12 a year, or it may be £30, but rarely more, a sum which does not allow much margin for charity!

I fear that when we travel, self too often absorbs us, and we forget that "he who giveth unto the poor lendeth unto the Lord."

In a Jungle Village.

MAH TI was sitting on the bank dangling her feet in the tepid stream—tepid even here where it raced round the bend, over the grey stones in the shade of the three great tamarind trees. All day long the sun had been drinking the coolness from the water, and sapping the very life from the hard brown earth.

And Mah Ti was hot and cross.

Shwè Bau had run off to the sugar-canies and left her all alone to drive the cattle down, and the dun cow had been so troublesome. The rustling of the canes came from the brake across the nullah, and the chop-chop of Shwè Bau's dah.

"Little beast!" said Mah Ti wrathfully; "I'll sugar-cane him when I catch him!"

The cattle were in no hurry to go home; they were drinking still and munching the short sweet grass by the water's edge. The dun cow had wandered down the stream, and was gazing with innocent eyes which seemed to say, "How hot and cross you look! I wonder who has been annoying you?"

"Go away," said Mah Ti; and the cow moved lazily along the bank as the little pebble hit her. "Go away; I want to dream and dream. I'm Queen of Burma now, and I've heaps and heaps of silk htamains, and I'm going to a pway every day, and—and—and Moung Hlein shall go too. Go away, or I'll throw another, and it'll hurt."

And the shadows stole slowly across the water, and Mah Ti sat and dreamed. A little breeze crept up from the great river and wandered softly along the nullah. It played among the folds of the pretty pink htamain and whispered to the white jungle-flower nodding in the soft dark hair. The tamarind leaves woke up from their long sleep, and laughed joyfully because the heat was over and the cool night coming. And the tall kine-grass on the bank was waving to and fro with a sound like the breaking of the sea on a sandy beach. A blue-jay came and chattered in the branches of the gold-mohur tree, and a partridge was calling from the jungle by the river.

And Mah Ti sat and dreamed of simple things, for she was only a little village girl, and her world began in the jungle behind the small thatched hut, and ended in the jungle across the great

river. And her soul was still wrapped up in the delights of a pway and the beauties of wondrous-coloured silk. She knew there was a strange world far away in the south, on the banks of the river—a world of smoke and noise and work and trouble ; where there was no jungle clustering round the houses ; where the young hares never played in the cool of the evenings, and the call of the partridge was never heard. Three times every year Moung Miah and his brother sailed down in the large brown rice-boats with the quaint carven prows, whereon jostled a strange crowd of demons and maidens and gods, all fearfully and wonderfully made. And when they came back Moung Miah would come in the evenings and would tell of all that he had seen and heard and done, and how his rice had all been sold, and in its place was a goodly pile of rupees, hidden safely away in case the dacoits, who were busy to the westward, should think of coming to the river, and searching the hut of the richest man in the little village, and for miles and miles round.

And always Moung Miah would say, "Come with me, Mah Ti. I've loved you ever since I can remember, even from the time when you were a little brown dot playing with the puppies and the chickens in the rice straw."

And always Mah Ti would shake her pretty dark head, for she hated Moung Miah, and his deceitful eyes, and his stories of buying and selling, and the money arising therefrom. And, moreover, there were other and weightier reasons.

Now Moung Hlein was lazy, as befitted a true Burman and the descendant of a wandering dacoit Boh of years ago. Also he was poor and good for nothing. Wherefore Mah Ti loved him exceedingly, which was natural and as things should be. He was coming across the rice-fields now, singing and laughing gaily to himself. He had been away for six long days, and he was glad to see again the glimmer of the pink htamain between the trees.

A tamarind leaf fluttered down on Mah Ti's upturned face, and she woke from her dream with a little start. And the dream was a living reality.

"Guess," said Moung Hlein, as he sat behind her, splashing with his tired feet in the water.

"You're going to be married," said Mah Ti promptly.

"I'm going to be married some time, I hope ; and I'm going away—to-morrow."

" You're going away to-morrow," said Mah Ti slowly ; " going away to-morrow ! And I haven't seen you for a year ! "

" Six days."

" It's not six days when I call it anything else. It's a year to me. Will you tell me, please, why you are going away, and where ? "

" I'm going to Mindat, to Boh Shwè's camp, where I've just come from," said Moung Hlein ; " I'm too lazy to work, and he wants me. He has hundreds of men with him now, and more are coming every day. In a few months the kallahs will be destroyed or driven from the country, and I shall be one of the greatest men in Burmah, with land and cattle and heaps and heaps of money. And then I'm going to be married—to you. Now will you put away that horrid little frown, and say I've brought good news ? "

" But suppose," said Mah Ti mournfully, " that you don't destroy the kallahs, or that they won't be driven away ? "

" Suppose any other fairy tale," replied Moung Hlein, laughing. " Come, I'll help you to drive the cattle home. They're gone off into the jungle, and it's getting dark."

Shwè Bau came sauntering from the brake, munching a sugar-cane. He took up a position on the far side of Moung Hlein, being afraid of the wrath to come. But Mah Ti never even saw him, nor his valiant battles with the dun cow to make up for past bad conduct.

A hare ran across her path unnoticed, and a partridge rose with a whirr from under her feet. She was gazing away into the blood-red sunset and dreaming of the days to come. And while she gazed the sun went down behind the hills, and the land was wrapped in gloom. And she turned away with a sudden sadness on her face. For who could tell the secrets of the ever-changing future, or see the end thereof ?

And before the next day's dawn began to tinge the cloudless sky, Moung Hlein had said good-bye and gone. And Moung Miah's small eyes gleamed with an unholy joy. For the way lay clear before him, and soon he would gather the poor man's one ewe lamb into his own rich fold.

The months rolled wearily by, and the earth and all upon it seemed burnt up and dying in the terrible heat, till June came. And one dark, suffocating night, when even the lean pariah dogs lay gasping on the hard brown clay outside the huts, there was a rustle of wind in the plantain trees, and a sudden smell of moi .

earth in the air. Men and women, who were tossing about restlessly on the thin grass mats, sat up and listened as the first large drops fell on the thatched roofs. And then, with a loud roll of thunder, the torrent burst, and the rain came down in dense sheets. The whole village woke up and stood at the edge of the huts, laughing gaily across to each other. The children clambered down the ladders to the ground, and ran about in their little brown skins, splashing one another with the water, which was already ankle-deep in parts. And the dogs ran off for shelter underneath the huts, where they stood shaking the rain from their backs and barking at the children's play. All the land seemed to wake up, and was glad. Only Mah Ti stood by herself, looking into the gloom beyond the mist of rain.

Four long months ago Moung Hlein had gone out through the bamboo gateway ; and now no one could tell her if he was alive or dead. And, through the long days of rain that followed, Mah Ti sat watching the men go out to the marshy fields. And she worked sadly at the piece of silk—red and grey—which was to be a putso for Moung Hlein—if ever he came back again.

So far from all beaten tracks was the little village that no news came to it, no sound of the trouble and strife in the world beyond.

* * * * *

A November moon was fading out in the coming dawn, and Mah Ti lay awake staring at it through the chinks of the bamboo walls. A plover rose far away, by the path across the rice-fields, and shrilled its warning cry. Mah Ti sat up and listened. Something had disturbed the birds in their haunt by the shallow pool !

Could it be Moung Hlein coming home again ?

How weird the jungle looked in the dying moonlight !

Mah Ti stood up with beating heart. What was that long black line winding slowly and silently across the rice-fields ?

A dog came out from underneath the hut and barked angrily, and at the sound the line broke into two. There was a wild rush of ponies' hoofs, the clatter of harness and the crashing of the brushwood. With a start the village woke. From every hut the dogs ran, barking furiously. The frightened women and children hid themselves behind the rice-baskets or underneath the huts, and the men peered out anxiously into the night. Mah Ti clasped her hands to stay their trembling. What evil thing was going to befall the peaceful village ?

All round the stockade there was a line of panting, steaming ponies ; and by each pony stood a pale-faced man clad in uncouth brown garb, and each man held a rifle at the ready. Through the open gateway came the captain—a short, strongly-built man ; his left arm bound in a blood-stained handkerchief, his right hand resting on the revolver at his hip. Behind him were four men with bayonets fixed, and a Burman with a silver-hilted dah.

The stains of toil and travel were on them all, and the malaria of the jungles had left its imprint on their haggard faces. The interpreter called loudly for the head man, and old Taik Gyi came fearfully down the ladder from his hut, and squatted respectfully on the ground before them.

"Tell him," said the captain, "to call all the people into the centre of the village."

Slowly they clustered together, gazing with awe at the bayonets gleaming in the rosy light of the breaking day. The interpreter scanned each face closely and eagerly, and then shook his head.

Meantime the four soldiers were searching every nook and corner of the village.

They prodded the rice-baskets and the cotton-bales with their bayonets. They frightened out the angry dogs who were hiding in the gloom.

The captain uttered an oath. "Missed again. Call in the men ; we'll let them rest here half an hour."

They made a fire of logs and brushwood, and gathered round it, smoking and chatting gaily ; it was chilly in the early November morning. The tired ponies hitched to the hut poles were munching little heaps of bamboo leaves. The villagers drew nearer to the circle round the fire ; they were losing their fear of these men with the pleasant, laughing faces, who threw them bits of broken biscuit and called for water in very bad Burmese. The captain had drawn apart, and was talking long and earnestly with the interpreter and old Taik Gyi. The air was growing warm in the morning sun when the ponies were led into line, and the troop filed slowly out of the village.

"Boh Shwè's dead," said Taik Gyi ; "his camp was rushed in the hills, the bands are scattered, and the kallahs are hunting them all over the country. Moung Hlein was tracked to Majegone, and they thought he was hiding here. There's a big price on his head. 'Twas his gang shot the captain in the arm."

Mah Ti left the chattering crowd and went back into the loneliness of the hut.

Moung Hlein had been at Majeegone but yesterday. He was near her now, she knew. Not all the kallahs in the world would keep him from her. All day long she sat, hearing the footsteps come and go, and waiting half in hope and half in fear for the one she knew so well. The sun sank slowly down towards the west, and Shwè Bau came to help to drive the cattle to the stream.

"Go away and hunt for hares in the sesame-patch," said Mah Ti; "I don't want you with me." And the boy ran off joyfully, whistling to the dogs as he went. "Perhaps he's waiting for me by the tamarind trees," she thought, as she drove the lazy cattle impatiently along the narrow track between the bamboos and the thorn-bushes. The men were coming home from the fields. They passed her with a merry laugh and jest. Oh! surely they must hear the beating of her heart!

* * * * *

There was no one by the tamarinds. Mah Ti flung herself down above the babbling river with a sigh that was half a sob. A blue-jay was chattering in the branches of the gold-mohur tree. There was a rustle in the kine-grass. Mah Ti sprang to her feet, and in a moment was in Moung Hlein's arms, sobbing as if her heart would break. Was it really Moung Hlein? This man with the look in his face of a hunted animal, the hollow cheeks, and the torn blood-stained clothes? "Oh, my dear, my dear," she cried, "you've come back to me at last! It's been so weary waiting for you through the long, long days and nights. Come home with me now, my poor, tired boy, and never leave me again, will you—never?" Moung Hlein was soothing and caressing the trembling form in his arms. There was a look of despair in his eyes. The river was babbling over the stones and a partridge was calling from the jungle by the river.

He spoke at last with a strange little break in his voice that he could not stop. "My poor little sweetheart! Am I never to bring you anything but trouble? I can't go back with you; I can't ever live in the dear old village and help you drive the cattle home again. I daren't even let any one but you know that I'm here. Don't you know, dear, that if I'm caught they'll hang me like a dog? I've only six men left with me, and I can't even trust them.

Stop crying, sweetheart, or you'll make me cry too. And sit down here beside me on the grass, where we used to sit so long ago. See, I haven't been away at all, and it's all just like it was before. Now, tell me what my little girl's been doing all these weary days."

The sun went down and the pale moon shone through the tamarind trees. What were sun and moon to them? What was anything, anywhere, in all the world, while they were together listening to the babbling of the stream in the shallows and the whispering of the wind in the kine-grass? Mah Ti rose at last with a little shiver. The partridge had long ago ceased from calling, and the blue-jay had flown from the gold-mohur tree.

"Good-night, dear heart," said Moung Hlein. "Good-bye until to-morrow. I shall be near you all the night in the hollow by the plantain-grove."

He stood awhile, watching the graceful little figure going sorrowfully along the jungle-track in the moonlight. Was this to be the end of all his plans and hopes? Hunted night and day, from place to place; weary and hungry, and always with this weight upon his heart. And if the hunters found him—

"Better so," he said wearily. "Better anything than this!"

The kine-grass had scarce stopped quivering behind him, when a figure came cautiously out into the moonlight. "The hollow by the plantain-grove; and a price upon your head; and Mah Ti loves you. I don't think you'll trouble me much more, my friend." And Moung Miah stole cautiously away. Slowly he sneaked past the village, keeping in the shadows, and then turned westward towards the kallahs' camp.

The weary hours dragged by. Again Mah Ti lay with wide-opened eyes, gazing at the narrow track glistening in the moonlight; again a plover rose, calling loudly. Was she dreaming, or was it really the long black line winding slowly again across the rice-fields? It had left the path now; and was going noiselessly through the jungle behind the village, and that way lay the plantain-grove. Down to the ground sprang Mah Ti, and through the open gate, love and terror hastening her feet. The trailing bamboo branches caught her in their folding arms; the cruel thorn-bushes tore the pink htamain and scarred her fair soft limbs. Over the sharp stones and the fallen trees, through the nullah where the stream was laughing gaily in the moonlight,

through the thick dark patch of jungle sloping downwards to the hollow—gasping, staggering, falling—on she went. Moung Hlein heard the crackling of the plantain leaves. He sprang to his feet and listened eagerly. Mah Ti! Could it be she?—flying, with dishevelled hair and panting breath, across the maize-field! She was near him now and stretching out her arms to him.

“Quick, quick!” she cried. “They’re coming; they’re——”

A scattered volley from the jungle and a straggling line of fire; and Mah Ti fell forward on her face, clutching wildly at the branches of a thorn-bush. With a cry and an oath Moung Hlein flung down his gun, and stooping, lifted the lifeless form tenderly in his arms, and plunged into the jungle. Back along the path where one short minute ago Mah Ti had come with flying weary feet. He could hear the crackling of the dead leaves and the sound of many feet pressing through the underwood behind. They were very near him now. Past the tamarind trees he stumbled—the tamarind trees and the kine-grass—where but that afternoon he had sat with Mah Ti in paradise, whispering loving words to her, and listening to them shyly whispered back. As he crossed the little open glade in the full glow of the moonlight a bullet whistled past him and splashed up a shower of spray from the rippling water. Closer to him he pressed the quiet form in his arms, and faster still he hurried along the bank through the waving grass. He was nearing the end of the nullah now, where the old boat was moored; and then—the broad, swift river, and safety. Down the sandy bank he staggered; tenderly he laid his light burden in the boat. The rope was cast off now, and they swung out into the middle of the stream, and drifted slowly toward the swift river. Then, for the first time, he saw the pale upturned face, with the small blue mark in the forehead. With a cry of agony he bent down and lifted her in his arms. The line of brown-clad figures burst through the belt of jungle, to the bank, and raised their long rifles.

“Cease firing, men. Damn it, don’t you see there’s a woman!”

The rifles were lowered. One shot rang out, and Moung Hlein sprang his own height into the air and fell with outstretched limbs across the body of Mah Ti. The captain swung round on his heel, and, with an oath, struck Moung Miah to the earth. The boat drifted out with the current, and danced merrily down the great river.

VERASSYD.

Dightly Dangerous.

By A. E. NOBLE.

"Listen to me, and by me be ruled,
And I will do the thing I have not done."

Tennyson.

PERFECTION is not to be found in man. Nor, for that matter, in woman either. The woman I'm going to tell you about is not perfect, but she is very human—therefore interesting. She was in a 'bus when I first saw her, and a man was with her. The man I knew slightly, the woman not at all. It was one warm September evening, about a quarter to eight o'clock.

Under his light dust-coat, which was partly unbuttoned, he was in festive array. She had a kind of hood on, and, I imagined, her war paint also ; but if so, it was completely hidden by a grey cloak, buttoned up to her chin. She had a piquant, interesting face, large light eyes and pretty eyebrows, no complexion. He was a dark, handsome fellow with a moustache. I think he recognized me as he got in the 'bus, but I'm not sure. Of course I was not so thickheaded as to take the slightest notice of him. The light of the lamp fell full on the woman's face. I was in a dark corner. Presently they began to talk.

"How jolly we happened to meet this morning!" said he. "I wonder how long it is since I last saw you?"

For reasons you will understand presently, I shall mention as few names as possible in this story.

"Ten weeks and three days," she replied promptly, giving him a smile and a slow little nod.

"You ought to have met me in Piccadilly Circus *that day*," and he also smiled.

"You mean on that Friday? I *did* go."

"I waited ten minutes for you!"

"How kind!" said she with another slow nod and smile. He also smiled, but looked a little embarrassed.

"So it is ten weeks and three days since we met! What have you been doing with yourself since then?"

"We went down——"

"Fares, please," said the conductor, and I didn't hear the rest. They got out at Charing Cross, so did I, and then I lost sight of them.

I was going to the "Comedy." I got there early, and spent the fiddle-scraping time in thinking of that man and that woman. Knowing the man, I wondered why they were in a 'bus. Evidently they were going to some place of entertainment, and I was sure the man would have preferred a cab. It must have been the woman who elected to go by 'bus, and therein she showed her wisdom. The man was, I knew, engaged to be married, so he wasn't playing fair ; at least I supposed not. But she might not have been playing fair either. Anyway, it was no affair of mine, and the fiddle-scraping being over, I tried to listen to the music, but, do what I would, I couldn't get that piquant little face out of my mind.

As usual, the first piece was short, and at its end I put up my glass to look round the house. I focussed it, and the first face I saw was the woman's ! The man was beside her. They were talking ; they neither of them looked about them. She was enjoying herself with the enjoyment of one who does not often go to an entertainment of any kind. And he was enjoying her company. They were in the front row of the dress-circle, well in sight of the whole house. I looked at her face long enough to remember it till the end of my life—even had I never seen her again—which I did.

When the curtain at last drew up I had no longer any excuse for looking at them, and at the end of the performance when I turned round they were leaving their seats, and I saw them no more.

Next morning as I was going down the Strand, a man coming up Chancery Lane ran against me ; it was at the corner of the lane. Without a word of apology he pushed past me. I knew him.

"Better knock me down flat, and kick me at once," said I. "Do, if it will be any relief to you."

He turned, grasped my arm, and without a word dragged me across the road, and hurried me on to the Temple Gardens. Then he spoke.

"I'm in a deuce of a bother. I must talk to some one ! why not to you ?"

"Why not, indeed?" I queried; "fire away."

"Here goes, then. You know I live with an old aunt?" (I nodded.) "Well, there's a niece lives with her also—no relation of mine—a young woman of twenty-five or thereabouts, whom I pity from the bottom of my heart."

"And 'pity is akin—'"

"No, it isn't! not in this case, at least! Well, last night the old lady thought she was robbed of fifty pounds, and she declared that unless it was found she'd give Kathie, her niece, in charge for stealing it, or turn her out of the house, neck and crop."

"What made her suspect her niece?"

"That's more than I can tell, but Kathie's as obstinate as a mule;" he paused and looked at me.

"You'd better go on; you haven't told me all."

"Well, it seems that Kathie went out last night, quietly, without saying a word to any one. I should have thought she had a perfect right to do so if she liked, but my blessed aunt thinks differently."

"How was it found out that she had done so?"

"That was my fault. As a rule, I go out in the morning, after breakfast, and come home any time after twelve at night, but last night I was seedy, so I came in about eight o'clock, and having nothing more interesting to do, I thought I'd pay up some arrears of duty, and go and talk to Aunt Rebecca for a quarter of an hour."

"Is she an invalid?"

"She says so. The delusion suits all of us, so we never combat it. Any way, she has a good-sized bed-room and sitting-room leading into each other, and there she passes her life."

"Go on."

"Well, I went up to see her. She had a good old grumble about Kathie's iniquities, as a matter of course—she always does. I let her grumble. She feels better and is more amiable to Kathie for a day or two. Then she told me that she had written for some money, and that they had sent her down £50 in gold from the bank. She showed me the little leather bag containing it, and asked me to put it into a drawer for her in her *escritoire* and give her the key. I did so. I also told her that I thought it would be better to pay bills by cheques every three months. She told me not to be a meddlesome fool. Soon after that I went down stairs, lighted a cigar, and went for a stroll."

"Where was Miss Kathie all this time?"

"I don't know. I saw nothing of her. When I came back from my walk about ten o'clock, the house was in confusion. The old lady had lost her money, all the maids had been called over the coals, and Kathie was not to be found!"

"But what had become of the money?"

"All in good time. The money's not the big end of my woe. My aunt swore that after I left her, she went into her bed-room at once. That at nine o'clock she suddenly remembered that she had promised to give the cook some money, and that when she went into the sitting-room to get it out of the drawer it was gone!"

"It looks very much as if you were the thief," laughed I.

He shook his head.

"It seems that Kathie has a key to the drawer, and the old lady declared she heard her moving about in the room, after she had gone into her bed-room."

"What does Miss Kathie say?"

"When she came in at past eleven, she declared she had been out since seven o'clock, and utterly declined to say where!"

"That was embarrassing!"

"My aunt seemed to find it infuriating. She called Kathie into her room and talked to her in a way to make your hair stand on end. And Kathie was not conciliating. All the time Aunt Rebecca was talking she said not one word, but moved about the room, putting things in their places, as if she had no concern in what my aunt was saying. Presently she held out something in her hand and said scornfully, 'Is this your money?' It was!"

"How had it got there?"

"Unknowingly the old lady had given me a bag of old coins to put away instead of the gold," replied my friend. "You might imagine that that would be the end of the row. Nothing of the sort! Kathie was expected to explain her absence—where she'd been and all that, you know. This she wouldn't do, and I believe she is to leave the house to-morrow."

"It is a great pity," said I vaguely, not knowing what to say.

"I wish you'd come and dine to-night with me and see Kathie. I think you ought after all I've told you about her."

"All right, I will. Eight o'clock?"

"Exactly."

When I walked into the drawing-room that evening, had it

been possible to do so, you might have knocked me down with the oft quoted "feather." There, seated near the fire, was my fair friend of the "Comedy!" I was duly introduced, dinner was announced, and I took her into the dining-room. The old lady did not "show." Fred—my friend's name is Fred—made the usual excuses for her absence, the table was tastefully decorated, and we had a nice little dinner very well served. After Kathie left us, Fred said :

"Things have taken another turn : Aunt Rebecca is mad now, because Kathie insists on leaving."

I pondered for a moment, then said, "I wish you'd leave me alone with Miss Kathie after we go to the drawing-room, will you?"

"All right, but I don't see what good that's going to do."

"One can never guess the consequence of one's most inconsequential action," I replied oracularly.

Fred shrugged his shoulders and led the way to the drawing-room.

Miss Kathie gave us tea. I was meditating a bold step, and said little. To tell one truth, for the first time in my life, I was head over ears in love. And Kathie was the girl on whom I had bestowed my untried affections. To tell another truth, I was rather disturbed by the information that Kathie was casting herself adrift of her own set purpose. Presently Fred mumbled something about going to see his aunt, and left the room. Kathie immediately asked me if I cared for music.

"Immensely ! How did you enjoy yourself at the 'Comedy' last night ?"

It was brutal ! For a moment I thought the girl was going to faint. She rallied gallantly however. But it was with a very weak smile that she said :

"Very much, but I did not see you there," and she gave her characteristic little nod.

"I *was* there. My attention was drawn to you by the fact that I know the man you were with."

"Oh-h-h," such a low, deep-drawn, miserable exclamation. Then she buried her face in her hands. But I was ruthless.

"Tell me all about it," said I firmly.

"I can't. I'm ashamed."

"Doubtless. But it is better that I should know, and advise you, than that I should tell your aunt and Fred."

She looked up. "If I tell you all—everything—you will tell no one? Not even the man you saw me with? Promise!" eagerly said she.

I breathed more freely. She felt she could tell me everything. Me, a man, and an utter stranger.

"If you do that, and are guided by me, I promise," said I gravely, and then added, "Where did you first meet him?"

"Soon after Christmas last year. Aunt sent me to Liverpool Street Station to meet an old friend who was coming to stay with her. I got there at three o'clock, and the old lady did not arrive till nine. There is no comfortable waiting-room on that side of the platform, and I felt cold and starved. I couldn't get anything to eat, because I was afraid to leave the platform for fear the train should come in. I saw your friend. He was waiting for a train, too. But he knew all about the trains, and went away and came back. Presently a train came in. I walked all along the line of carriages, but the old lady was not there. As I turned to go back to the waiting-room, I slipped, and should have fallen down, but he saved me. I thanked him, and he went away. In a moment or two he came back, and brought me a cup of tea and a piece of cake."

Here Kathie paused and raised her eyes.

"I was so hungry, and it was so kind. I took it and I didn't offer to pay for it. He stood by me until I'd finished, then he took the cup away, and the right train came in, and I didn't see him any more."

"But you told him your name and he told you his," said I.

"I don't know his name and I have never told him mine."

"Well, go on. When did you next meet?"

"At Mudie's. I go there every Saturday, wet or fine, to change aunt's books. About this time last year I met him there accidentally, and he spoke to me. Then a month later we met again, and he asked me to go to an afternoon's entertainment at St. James's Hall, and I went. I enjoyed it very much!" She paused and looked at me deprecatingly.

"And then?"

"Then I did not see him for months. It was at Mudie's we met again, and we made an engagement to meet at Piccadilly Circus. I waited there half-an-hour, but somehow we missed each other."

"How long was that ago?"

"Ten weeks and four days."

"What makes you remember the date so well?" I asked jealously.

"Because when I went home that day Aunt Rebecca gave me five pounds, and promised to give me five more at the end of three months."

"How came you to go to the 'Comedy' with him last night?"

"I met him in the afternoon, and he asked me to go," said she simply. "It was the last time, for he is going abroad."

"And you have never written to him, nor he to you?"

"No. There was nothing to write about," said she in a surprised tone. "I only went out with him because I was so awfully dull."

"Do you suppose he asked you to go because he was awfully dull?"

"No. I suppose it was out of kindness, and because I amused him."

"Do you never go out anywhere?"

"No, never. I have been here ten years, and except those two times I've never been anywhere."

This did not sound lively. It sounded dreadfully dreary, grey, and miserable. I felt sorry for her.

"Fred did offer to take me out at first, but aunt said such disgusting things about it that I wouldn't go," and Kathie shook her head emphatically.

"Do you know that your friend is going to be married to-morrow week?"

"Is he? Do you know where? I love to see weddings," she cried eagerly.

It was clearly of no use to lecture her. Her conduct was the result of years of repression. I tried to explain to her how wrong she had been, but found no suitable words with which to express myself. Then I turned to another matter.

"Fred tells me you are going to leave your aunt."

"So I am. She has insulted me dreadfully. I've written to an old woman I know, and I shall go and live with her till I get a situation."

"You will do nothing of the kind! You will stay here for another three months, and then I'll get you a situation."

"What sort of place?"

"With some one who will be very kind to you, and will take you out a great deal."

"I shall not be *obliged* to take it?"

"No. If at the end of three months you refuse it, you can go where you will as far as I am concerned."

"You are good to me. I promise you I'll never walk the length of the street with anybody, unless I am properly introduced, again."

"And I promise I'll forget all you have told me, from this time forth."

Which was a vain promise, impossible to keep, but she does not know that.

* * * * *

At the end of three months I had made such good use of my time, that when I offered her the situation she accepted it.

"Over One Sinner That Repenteth."

By GUY DERING.

LATE one Sunday afternoon, in a bright October, I was walking up the hill which leads to the church at Pluckley—a lovely village in Kent—and wondering what special charm there could have been in the Continent to keep me away from my beautiful home for four whole years. The crops had all been gathered in, and that day was devoted to Harvest Thanksgiving, on which occasion every man, woman, and child in the parish, who were as a rule, I fear, far from regular in their attendance, made a point of coming to church.

The edifice itself stood out well on the spur of the hill—a grey stone, Early English pile, with a queer extinguisher-shaped spire, barely noticeable now against the darkening sky. All nature was going to rest, only disturbed by what was called the parson's bell ringing its last five minutes' warning to laggards. Within, all was brightly illuminated; the light streamed through the stained glass windows with a rich, warm glow, seemingly inviting those outside to enter and participate in the general rejoicing. I speak advisedly of those outside, for, although I was one of the last to toil up the hill, there was still the usual knot of young men and boys gathered round the churchyard gate, keeping up the time-honoured custom of the Pluckley *jeunesse dorée*, of seeing every one into church before entering themselves. That evening, however, they had abandoned their usual scrutiny of the passers-by, and did little more than acknowledge my presence as I stopped in the midst of them to see what was attracting their attention. They were staring fixedly over the irregular graves towards a remote corner under the low stone wall which, flanked by an avenue of elms, bounds one side of the churchyard. I followed the direction of their glance and saw a figure crouching over a grave, by a newly-erected tombstone. They may have been talking of her—for it was a woman—but whatever they had had to say was apparently said, for when I reached them there was not a word to be heard; expressive and sympathetic silence seemed to have struck these careless, light-headed lads dumb.

"Who is that over there, Tom?" I asked one of them, a big, sturdy fellow whom I had known from infancy. As I spoke the parson's bell stopped and the group made a move towards the church door. Tom lingered behind to whisper to me in an awe-struck voice: "It's Hester Erlwood, sir; her as used to work down at Little Chart Paper Mills, until—" and here the lad hesitated—"Until she left," he ended abruptly, and touching his cap to me, followed the others into church.

I walked round to the private entrance of the large roomy inclosure which had done duty as a family pew to my ancestors for many generations; but before going in, I looked once more over the mouldering stones, with their quaint old inscriptions more than half effaced by the lapse of time, to see whether the crouching figure was still there. Yes, there she was, with her hands clasped over the gravestone, her head resting against her arm, gazing in a hopeless way into the dark shadows of the elms.

An impulse irresistibly moving me, I shut the door, already half opened, and walked towards where the girl was seated. I remembered Hester Erlwood as she was four years before, and her attractive appearance had remained graven on my memory. She was then a tall, shapely girl of eighteen, full of life and fun, always laughing and joking with her companions, and the envy of them all, for she was in her way quite beautiful. The dark eyes were full of speaking vivacity, her raven hair used always to be carefully ranged in loops on the nape of a neck of which any girl might have been proud, and though she had a pale complexion, owing to the indoor nature of her occupation, there were moments when her pretty face would light up and her laughter be heard all the way up the long Swan Lane that led from the Little Chart Mills to her home.

As I approached her, the sound of my footsteps on the asphalted walk made her look up. Her eyes were filled with unutterable sadness, and they rested on me without a sign of recognition. Poor girl, what a change she had undergone! She had grown so thin, and her poor black dress seemed to hang about her in useless folds, while black lines under her eyes told of sorrow gnawing at her heart. She was no longer the neat, well-dressed girl that I remembered; but instead I found a sad and weary woman, without a care as to her personal appearance, with a face on which freshly shed tears were shining in the hollowed grooves of her

cheeks. It horrified me to find the poor thing in such sorrow, and seeing her blank look at one she thought a stranger, I sat down beside her and put my hand on her shoulder.

"Hester, don't you know me again?"

At the sound of my voice she turned quickly round with a gasp.

"Oh, Mr. Fred, I didn't know it was you; it is so dark here, and —"

She broke off and words seemed to fail her, so I interrupted gently :

"My poor girl, why are you here? You are in trouble. Tell me, is there anything I can do for you? Tell me, Hester."

My sympathy seemed to touch a chord and open the flood-gates of her sorrow, for she bowed her head on her knees and sobbed bitterly. I let her be for a time, then gradually I drew her to confide in me, and, sitting beside me under the shadow of the gigantic elms, while not a breath of air disturbed the peaceful quiet, only broken ever and anon by the responses of the choir and a crowded congregation, she told me her sad story with many breaks and sobs. I do not pretend to reproduce her homely language, but will tell the story as she told it to me, poor girl.

Her bosom heaved as if uplifted by a sob that could not escape, and her lips trembled as if she feared to say the words that were longing to come forth. At last, after a long and painful silence, she said with sudden resolution :

"You remember Jim Brenchfield, sir?"

"Do you mean a tall, dark young fellow who used to live half-way up Charing Hill?"

She bent her head in token of assent.

"I remember often seeing him sitting on the wall of the bridge over the river at Little Chart, talking with you girls from the mills at the dinner hour."

"He did worse than talk," and a gleam flashed from Hester's eyes, while her features contracted and accentuated the strange hissing tones that issued from her lips. "He used to come over to Pluckley on business and often I passed him in Swan Lane as I went down to the mills in the morning. At first he never noticed me and I never thought about him; but gradually he got to say good morning as I passed, and I would say the same to him. Gradually, too, I found my eyes would get fixed on the ground

whenever I met him, and although he took to stopping to say a few words, I never could answer him. One day when I was going down early by myself—I wasn't always alone, and then he wouldn't stop but just said good morning and passed on—he stopped me and told me I had beautiful eyes. It wasn't my fault. The habit of seeing him, and the flattering words which he repeated day by day made me begin to like him. And then it seemed as if my life had changed. When he was nigh, the sun always seemed to shine brighter; when he was gone, I could only count the hours and the minutes until I saw him again. I was only eighteen and too young to be deceitful, so I told my father and mother about Jim and how he said he liked me, and how I liked him. But they warned me against him and said he was a bad lot. This made me proud for Jim's sake, and after this, fool that I was, I used to meet him in the evenings, when I was supposed to be at a neighbour's. One of these evenings he took advantage

"The wretch!" she ended, with a sob, letting her head fall again on her hands. A few moments of troubled silence passed, while I looked away into the long unkempt grass of the Kentish churchyard, until the evening breeze springing up made me remember that the girl had only her thin dress to protect her. My overcoat was on my arm, so I placed it softly over her shoulders. This seemed to rouse her, and she continued:

"After that I didn't see him for some time, and I went on in the old way working at the mills. Then I found that when he did come again, it was just as if he'd put a bandage on my eyes with all his soft words; and when I wanted to move it, he'd put it back with his false oaths and lying kisses."

"Then you believed him?"

"Oh, yes; I believed every word he said. Mr. Fred, have you ever been in loye?" she asked, looking up at me. I could not restrain the smile that rose to my lips, and she seemed to take it as an answer.

"I believed in him enough to leave my old people and go to him. We went to Rochester, where he had an aunt who was willing to receive me. He had been dismissed by his employer at Charing, he told me, and was not going back there any more. Oh, Mr. Fred, all the time I was in that house my father and mother haunted me every night, frowning at me in anger for what I'd done. But though I knew they would never forgive me

I longed to see them just once more ; I longed for my old home in the street at Pluckley, with its bit of garden at the side, and the big tree where mother used to hang her washing on Wednesdays. Just before my child was born Jim came back from London, where he had been to look for another situation, and he told me he would marry me soon. But after the little girl was born he began to put off being married. One day he came and said he would take the child and put it out to nurse, the other side of London, so that father and mother needn't know all. This made my blood boil. I told him what I thought of his conduct and that I would never give up the child. The moment it was out of my mouth I knew I'd done for myself. By the look he gave his aunt it was easy to understand what he meant ; he cared for me no longer, and would never marry me now.

"What was I to do ? A girl with a life ruined at eighteen and a fault that never would be repaired ! I decided to go, and one night when Jim was away I left the house, taking my baby with me. Maidstone was where I went. I had a little money, my savings which I had taken on leaving Pluckley, which helped me to live until a kind clergyman's wife found me employment ; but I could only just earn enough to keep a roof over the child and myself, and that was a room that I shared with another girl. Oh, that was the most miserable time of all !

"One day, coming over the bridge, I felt some one touch me from behind and say, 'Hester !'

"When I turned, there was Frank Willock, from Pluckley. Do you remember Frank Willock, sir, that worked on the railway ? Well, his voice seemed to me the voice of an angel, and an angel he proved to me.

"At first I could hardly speak.

"'Frank,' I said, 'Frank, have you come from Pluckley ? Tell me about father and mother.'

"'They're both of them well,' he answered.

"Then the tears would come, and I cried for thankfulness, right in the middle of the street, till my little girl opened her eyes and put up her little hand to my face.

"I saw Frank look hard at the child and at me ; then in a moment he understood. He didn't speak, but just turned as white as anything and looked like falling.

"I can't tell you, sir, how good and kind Frank was to me.

He never left me until he'd got better lodgings for us, and saved me all confession and trouble, never asking a word. In the mornings he never missed coming to see if we were well, and in the evenings he'd come and sit and talk for a long time, after his work was over. But every now and then he used to look at me and the baby with such sad eyes that it made me miserable. One day I told him of it; and then he said he had to go away for two days. At the end of that time he came back in quite a different mood, just as if he'd got over some difficulty, and said to me straight, 'Come along; let's be off.'

"Where to?"

"Where to? Home, of course," he answered.

"But my people—"

"Never mind that."

"And the journey—"

"Never mind that." And I couldn't get any more out of him. There wasn't much to pack up, so we were soon ready. I couldn't help feeling that this was different from Jim's way—his was a stern, harsh will; Frank's was soft and gentle, so that I couldn't refuse to go, somehow.

"We got to Pluckley at nightfall. When we came up the Station Road and got in sight of the village my heart began to beat as if it would burst, and I asked Frank what would happen if my people would not see me. He only looked at me and smiled happily. Outside the cottage we stopped for a minute; then all at once Frank threw open the door and pushed me in, holding my little girl in my arms, out of the darkness into the dear old kitchen, where I found my poor father and mother, looking years older. 'Hester, girl!' 'Father; mother!' and I was sobbing in mother's arms while father stood by, holding my treasure and wiping his eyes. They told me how they had mourned for me, but had never heard a word until Frank came and told them that he had found me. At once I looked round for Frank—but he hadn't come in. For the next few days it all seemed to me like a dream, and I wished it could have been. But my baby was there, with her smiling, innocent face, God bless her, to remind me of all I'd gone through.

"I soon began to get strong and well again, with such loving care, and Frank would take me sometimes for beautiful walks in the woods. It was during one of these that he made me sit down

on the trunk of a fallen tree and sat down beside me. I saw he had something to say, so I waited for him to speak, but he was a long time before he said :

"Hester, did you never know how I cared for you, how I loved you, my dear ?"

"Then I looked into his eyes, and it all came upon me like a flash. Better than he could have said it, I read in his eyes what he had suffered while Jim Brenchfield was about Pluckley. And after all I'd done he hadn't hated me, but had followed me to help and console me, just as if he loved me as much as before.

"I thought a great deal about Frank when I got home, and found myself wondering how I could have passed over a man with such a heart and taken one who had none. . . ."

After a moment she continued : "Then my baby fell ill. I don't know how she caught the fever, but the doctor told me soon that there was no hope. Only God knows the bitter hours I passed at her bedside, holding her little hands and looking on that little face, so dear to me, that I was to lose. I prayed to Him to take me instead, or to take us both ; but He punished me for my sin and took my little innocent."

Hester sobbed bitterly for some minutes while the tears trickled down my cheeks in sympathy.

"Poor Hester ; my poor, poor girl," I murmured, taking her hand and stroking it.

"Yes, sir, you're right ; I *am* a poor girl, and you must forgive my tears, for the wound is very sore still, sir."

Then she hardened herself to continue :—"There's not much more to tell. My little world seemed at an end now my little girl was taken ; but Frank tried to cheer me and kept looking at me in an eager, persuasive way, as if he dared not say what he wished. I knew what he meant. Poor Frank ! He had been a true friend. While I was ill he had seen to my baby's funeral ; he had had the grave clothes made, and he had got white flowers to cover her in her little coffin."

Again she bent her head. Then suddenly she looked up with a piteous glance of misery.

"And do you know how it all ended ? They all know it in the village."

I shook my head.

"Well, one day last July he came in the morning as usual to

see me before going down to his work on the railway, and said with a solemn face :

“ Jim Brenchfield died yesterday at Rochester ; his cousin said so yesterday evening .”

“ He took my hand .

“ ‘ Hester dear, I won’t worry you now,’ he said, and gave me just one kiss, the first he’d ever given me. Then he went off to work .”

“ In the afternoon they came and told me that he was working on the line, when a special express came up behind and crushed him dead. And now he’s buried here, beside my little girl. Since that day, Mr. Fred, I’ve come here every Sunday evening, because I think God must still be angry with me, to punish me so, and I dare not go to church.”

Just then the clergyman must have ended his sermon, for the organ pealed, and the first joyful notes of the final Harvest Hymn burst forth :

Come, ye faithful people, come,
Raise the song of Harvest-home :
All is safely gathered in,
Ere the winter storms begin :
God our Maker doth provide
For our wants to be supplied :
Come to God’s own temple, come
Raise the song of Harvest-home.

“ Come, Hester,” I said, leading her gently, unresisting, to the private door and so into the semi-darkness of the old pew, where she could be unobserved ; and as she fell on her knees I stole away, with a world of pity in my heart.

Some Ways of the World : Bygone and Present.

By W. W. FENN.

SOMEBODY says that everybody who is anybody has been at school at Brighton, and even I who am nobody have reaped the benefit of that scholastic experience. Therefore there can be no doubt as to the truth of the statement. By the simple inversion of the principle that the greater includes the less, the correctness of the dictum can be seen at a glance. If I can claim the queen of watering-places as my *alma mater*, it follows surely as night the day that more distinguished individuals can do the same.

This, however, is a detail of no importance ; it is sufficient for my present purpose that in my very early days I enjoyed such advantages as may arise to the youth who drinks in at one and the same time health and knowledge on the Sussex coast. I am afraid that the only advantage now lingering in my memory is that of having been there first introduced to one of the "ways of the world." Not a very long way, but a very high and a very fine way—in short the King's Highway, literally, for George IV. then sat on the throne and it was that Royal Personage, "the finest gentleman in Europe," who chiefly used the fifty miles of splendid macadamized high road between London and Brighton—the way in question. To him, I take it, is due the merit of having constructed, and of having invented Brighton—a merit which might go far to make us condone many of his shortcomings. But this again is a detail, for it is the recollections called up by that highway and the contrast they afford to the ways of the world when George IV. was king, and those by which we "get along" at present, which set me scribbling. Seeing what I have seen of modern progress, I am irresistibly impelled to set down, for my own satisfaction if not for that of others, some of the vagrant recollections which come into my mind when starting on that long life journey which covers an

epoch of transition unequalled by any sixty years of recorded civilization. The stage-coach period has received so much attention of late years—these years in which all sorts of reminiscences are held in high esteem by the reading public—that I will refrain from descanting on the comparative merits of the present and ancient means of transporting men, mails and merchandise. But certain little personal experiences may be sketched, otherwise I should not act up to the garrulous character assumed by all who egotistically suppose that the eyes of Europe are upon them, and that the whole world is interested in their early career.

Being, then, at school at Brighton, of course I used to make the journey to and fro, between the metropolis and the sunny southern town, by a four-horse stage-coach. Except that the stage-coach was sometimes an omnibus there were no other means of travelling, barring the long stage-waggon, of which more anon. The railway had hardly been thought of, certainly not a mile of it made. Babylon-by-the-Thames consequently was seven hours, roundly speaking, away from Babylon-by-the-Sea, and lucky indeed is it for those who are now looking forward to a bath-chair as the pleasantest vehicle in which they can perambulate the queen of watering-places, that things have changed since the time when a goat-chaise held that position in our youthful estimation. Yet it must not be supposed that those old days of the road were without enjoyment and fun, albeit at times a stage-coach, however well horsed and driven, was not the pleasantest mode of getting over the fifty miles. In the dreary winter weather, say towards the end of January, when the Christmas holidays were over, it was no very jolly thing to sit for seven hours muffled up like a mummy on the back seat of a coach, with rain, sleet or snow driving at you on the wings of a tearing wind fit to cut your teeth out. No! the only advantage of that state of things was, that you were a good deal longer than you are now before you actually came within the grip of your schoolmaster. Short of this little fact, however, it is pleasanter, when the elements are hostile, to jump into a snug railway carriage at Victoria, or London Bridge, and be landed on the King's Road within a couple of hours, even though you are going back to school. On the other hand, when days were long and the skies were blue, and one had the luck to get a front corner seat, or better still the box, was there anything in the world more exhilarating, either to man

or boy, than that journey on the top of the Brighton coach ! Safely mounted under the kindly eye of the "governor"—we called him "father" then—at the "White Horse Cellar," Piccadilly, or at the "Cross Keys," Gracechurch Street, there was sufficient excitement in the situation to drive away for a while the thoughts of what was awaiting us at the journey's end.

"Just give an eye to my son, will you ?" our dad would say in a stage whisper (a stage-coach whisper, of course) to the coachman or guard, as he tipped one or other of those functionaries, or perhaps both ; "and see that he don't tumble off or get into mischief. You know where he is going—Mr. Caris's, Cannon Place; but I daresay he will be in Castle Square to meet him."

Then, with a familiar touch of his hat, the gentleman Jehu, taking the ribbons—he was always a great swell, and very often a great nobleman into the bargain—mounts the box and asks as the clocks strike eleven, "Are you right ?"

The guard answering in the affirmative, the four ostlers, one by the side of each glossy-coated steed, snatch away the horse-cloths, and we are off to the cheery blast of the long tin horn, whilst the admiring crowd seem almost inclined to give us a parting cheer.

Away we go down Piccadilly, either towards Grosvenor Place or Charing Cross, passing over the river at Vauxhall or Westminster, and so on to the villa-studded regions of Clapham and Tooting. The excitement continues mile by mile, stimulated by the brisk air, and increases at the first change. Admiringly and envyingly, as the horses are being unharnessed, we note the dexterity with which the driver unbuckles and flings aside the reins of the panting team, and catches on his whip, as they are flung up to him, those of the fresh roadsters put to in next to no time. Off once more, we begin to thread the leafy trim-hedged roads and mount the spurs of the Surrey hills, until the brow of those overhanging Reigate and Redhill is attained. Then what a glorious view opens before us ! We never see such a landscape from a railway train ; but we cannot stop to regard it long, for now we are descending the celebrated Reigate Hill. The foot of this declivity safely reached by means of the skid, and ribbons well in hand, we rattle through the tunnel under Lord Somers's grounds, and pull up at the "White Hart," Reigate, for dinner.

The appetite which the safe accomplishment of this, the first half of the journey, has created, is a thing to be remembered ;

whilst its satisfaction lends additional enjoyment to the second half, which within half an hour we have begun. We grow talkative, and if seated beside the coachman, who has lighted a cigar, we venture to ask him a question or two; probably about the horses, for he and they are the objects of our greatest admiration. He is always a gay, good-humoured gentleman, and descants pleasantly on the powers of the off leader, or the shortcomings of the near wheeler, interspersing his conversation by occasional references to objects of interest on the road, the country seats we are passing, and the merits and demerits of their owners. Of course we conceive a profound veneration for him, and long before we part are on intimate terms.

I recollect towards the end of my Brighton schooldays, and when the railway was in course of construction, being seated on the box beside just such a genial companion. He was either Mr. Brackenbury or Sir Vincent Cotton, for the coach was certainly "The Age," and they piloted it between them. But whichever or whoever it was, it was fine to hear him decry and denounce the new-fangled means of locomotion then impending, and which a distant peep of the just erected "Ouse Valley Viaduct," near Balcomb, brought on the *tapis*.

"Don't tell me," he said indignantly—"don't let anybody tell me they'll make twenty miles an hour out of it. If they do they'll come to frightful grief. And just look what an accident on a railway means! Why, if you're upset on a stage coach—why, there you are! But if you're smashed up in a train, where are you?"

This may have become an old story by this time, but it is a true one, for I heard the driver say it. Whether it was his own original way of putting the alternatives or not, I don't pretend to decide. Any way, on that same journey we were very nearly being in a position to illustrate one side of the question, and test the pertinence of his somewhat ambiguous inquiry. We had passed through Cuckfield, and were descending the south side of Clayton Hill, where the making of the great tunnel was in full blast. Signs of the excavation, seaming and scarring the landscape, were apparent in all directions. Just where the cutting at the southern end of the tunnel opens out upon a bit of flattish valley, an embankment was being formed. This indicated the direction of the railway line, which here, for some distance, ran nearly parallel to

the coach road, and only about a hundred yards to the right of it. We were cautiously trotting down the hill, when, at the moment we came abreast of the incomplete embankment, there emerged upon it, from the cutting, an engine with a train of tip-carts laden with chalk. The puff, puff and the shriek of the locomotive scared the horses, not then accustomed to such diabolical sounds, and the coachman had great difficulty in keeping them in hand. But when, on a sudden, one of the tip-carts was run up to the end of the embankment, and there, tilting up on end after the manner of its class, it shot forth its load of glittering white chalk straight as it were in the face of our leaders, they fairly swerved up on to the slope of the hedgerow on our left. The wheelers following suit as a matter of course, the coach was dragged likewise on to the slope, and for an instant seemed to be poised on its two off wheels. We were within an ace of turning over on our beam ends ; I was jolted almost into the coachman's lap, and must have fallen off but for the resistance his firmer body afforded me, and if he had not at that most critical juncture pulled the wheelers on to the flat again by a tremendous and most dexterous tug at the off reins.

" Whew ! " he cried, as he let fall the thong of his long whip on to the near leader's neck, and brought the whole cargo straight once more, " that's as close a shave as I've ever had in my life, or as you'll ever have in your life, young gentleman. May Old Mischief fly away with these confounded engines, and the rest of their gear, say I. They're his own inventions, I guess, and the sooner he takes them back again the better for us all. There ! " he continued after a pause, and when he had set the team into a hand gallop, to get out of the way, as he expressed it, of Mischief and all his works. " There ! I repeat, young gentleman, that's just what I say. If you'd been in that confounded train, and had been upset like that load of chalk, what would have become of you ? "

Then after regarding me for a moment with an air of affectionate and paternal interest, he added :

" Very well, don't tell me ; if the worst had come to the worst, and we'd been spilt off this coach, why, anybody would have known where we were. We could have been picked up, or the pieces could, and perhaps we should have been put together, and nobody might have been much the worse. But, Lor' bless me,

if we had been in a train—ugh! it makes me sick to think of it. No, young sir! take my word for it, railways are a mistake, and will bring the country to ruin."

Probably at that time I agreed with him, for I held him and all men who could drive a four-in-hand to be about the most knowing fellows going; but in thinking over this little squeak which we had for our lives or limbs—and you may be sure I have never forgotten it—I have modified my opinion. This by the way, however.

The circumstance, nevertheless, was only one of the many perils incidental to the good old coaching days, and in referring to it I am reminded that the accidents which used to happen occasionally on the Brighton road were very terrible, and sent a thrill of consternation through the travelling community, notably one which befel the "Quicksilver" coach somewhere during the thirties, and when William the Fourth was King. Several people were killed outright, and the whole coach-load severely injured. Other mishaps, too, stand on record, such as that which occurred to the "Criterion," though they escape my memory; but they were all calculated to throw doubt on the truth of my friend's dictum, although there is no denying that "There you *are!*!" when a coach capsizes. I should add that the incident I have just related happened in the winter time, and that I was the only outside passenger, the guard at the back barely escaping by the skin of his teeth from being thrown off. Most of the upsets, unlike that which so nearly occurred to me, and which was nobody's fault but the railway company's, were due mainly to the speed at which the journey was accomplished. Some of the coaches were very fast indeed, the horses going at full gallop nearly the whole way. This was the case with the luckless "Quicksilver," which did the fifty-two miles in something like five hours, stoppages included. But it did it once too often, and the accident brought about a general reduction of the speed. Between six and seven hours became the ordinary rate, and one or two machines (family coaches, they were called, one being, as I have said, an omnibus) required even eight hours to get from Westminster Bridge to Castle Square.

Castle Square was the rendezvous and great centre of coaching life at Brighton. Crowds of fashionable idlers would gather round the booking offices there of a morning, between ten and

twelve, to see the crack London coaches start ; and again between four and six in the afternoon, to see the down coaches come in ; just as in the present day people congregate at the Folkestone Pier to witness the in-coming and the out-going steam-packets. It was a gay and cheery spectacle that in Castle Square on a fine morning, but it was naturally one which schoolboys rarely got a peep at. Still I managed to do so somehow scores of times. Wandering nowadays round about the old familiar quarter, the whole scene comes back to me vividly. Away down the London Road, too, when there was no Preston Park or any Park villas in existence, I can see the spanking teams, the crowded swaying coaches, following each other in quick succession at certain times almost as quickly as the drags in Hyde Park follow each other at a meet of the Coaching Club ; I can hear the inspiriting horn, the clink of the pole-chains and splinter-bars, as they rattle by. Well ! one may see and hear a specimen of it all, once in a way, at the present writing, and one may try what the sensation is, of running down to Brighton behind four horses. But now it is at best an amateurish sort of fad—formerly it was the real thing, and there was no choice but to make your journeys in this fashion.

Times change and customs alter, and the outlook right and left on that familiar highway speaks no less of change than does the engine-whistle up at the terminus yonder. Where is that glorious stretch of inclosed greensward, known as Box's Cricket Ground, which used to lie between the Lewes and London Roads, and where the crack matches of that most cricketing of counties, Sussex, used to be played ? And where is Tom Box himself, prince of wicket-keepers, and the Lilywhites, father and son, very kings of bowlers, and the two Mynns, stout old Alfred and his brother Walter, emperors of the bat, with wiry Fuller Pilch (a Kentish man, but continually playing for Sussex), Sir Frederick Bathurst, Felix, Charley Taylor, and many others who used to flourish when our school mustered largely on the old ground to see the play ? Gone ! both the ground and the men, one and all—bricks and mortar no less than gravestones, alas ! covering the one and the other. Cricket, I am happy to think, however, never dies, and never can die, at any rate in Brighton, so long as boys continue to go there to school, or indeed so long as Englishmen continue to be worth their salt. Driven farther afield year by

year, there will always remain a cricket-field to be called after the name of Brighton, I trust, somewhere within reach of the town. The architect and the builder have done their worst in successive decades with Box's, Lilywhites', and the "Sussex Grounds," but these gentlemen may be defied to destroy the game itself.

So let us rejoice, and on our way to revisit the old school and have a talk with our old master or his successor, we will continue our memories of the Brighton of other days in contrast with those of the present. Everywhere this contrast is notable, particularly in the increased size of the place. North, east, and west, suburbs have sprung up, as witness that just beneath and upon the sides of the Race Hill. Acres of houses cover not only the old cricket grounds, but the very downs themselves, where they impinge upon the sea. Soon after the Queen came to the throne in 1837, she paid a visit to Brighton, with the intention of availing herself of the gimcrack marine residence built by her royal uncle George the Fourth, and from which not a single peep of the sea can be obtained. I recollect her entry by the London Road (she had to post all the way, of course) beneath a succession of triumphal arches which the loyal townsfolk set up to do her honour. But they did her so much honour by staring at her, and mobbing her, whenever she put even the tip of her nose outside the precincts of the pavilion, that she fairly cut and ran away within a very short time, and I do not think she has ever set foot in Brighton since—and no wonder. Fortunately for the British nation, her tastes and those of George the Fourth have not jumped together, and although we have to thank "the finest gentleman in Europe" for having, as it were, "invented Brighton," the spot he selected for the erection of, and the style of architecture he adopted for, his palace are clear indications of the sort of man he was. The Old Steine, with many other similar open spaces lying up the valley which ends on the south at the Aquarium, in his day and for long afterwards, as I can remember, were mangy, untenanted wooden-railed stretches of ragged turf, where the fishermen used to dry their nets. Notable and highly creditable to the corporation is the change since then which has overtaken the face of these inclosures, public and private, from the North Level right away down to the sea. But neither such garden promenades nor the bustling turmoil of the King's Road were likely to suit the retiring nature of our Queen, either as maid, wife, or widow. No!

Brighton is eminently a place for fashionable people in the winter, for holiday makers in the summer, and for boys, young and old, all the year round. Where, for instance, can they learn to swim so readily, either in summer or winter? Although Brill's original circular bath, which used to project far out into the Junction Road, has disappeared, its place is more than amply supplied by the modern erection hard by the spot; and the bathing machines all along the line of beach have increased in number to such an extent since my time that it is fair to suppose where one trembling urchin then tumbled into the sea from off their slippery steps fifty do now. The bathing arrangements at the head of the West and Chain Piers likewise afford advantages for all would-be "water-dogs" of which we old boys knew nothing, whilst good swimmers can, as of yore, by hiring a boat and pulling half-a-mile out, get a first-rate header—weather permitting. Memory brings back the feeling of terror with which those first plunges were made, either in the sea or at Brill's, where it was, by the way, I first learned to swim, by being shoved into the deep part by another fellow before I was quite undressed. A pair of corks were fortunately floating close by, and, gasping and spluttering, I managed to get them under my arms, and to my amazement found I could swim, even with my shirt on. And a pretty row I got into afterwards for wetting it and having to leave it behind me to be dried whilst I went back to school shirtless. Still I had learned to swim; with the corks, it is true, but I had made a beginning and found my nerve, and I was soon chaffed out of using these ignominious aids to natation, you may be sure.

The quarter during which this remarkable circumstance occurred was signalized by another historical event, no less notable, the birth of the Prince of Wales. On the 9th of November, 1841, we were all in the middle of dinner when suddenly the *Times* was brought in and handed to Mr. Caris, who then and there read out the news. Upon which we stood up and gave three ringing cheers, to his infinite amazement. His good-natured face soon relaxed into a smile, and, after a pause, he said:

"I suppose by that row you fellows mean you expect a half-holiday. Well, I suppose you must have it, only you had better finish your dinners first."

This process be sure did not take quite so long as usual, and

we were out in the playground within a quarter of an hour, celebrating the advent, and, as Mr. Caris advised us, endeavouring to fix it in our memories. I certainly succeeded in doing so.

Never forget that news travelled slowly in those days before the penny postage, railways, and electric telegraphs, and 1 p.m. was about the earliest hour at which the London morning papers reached Brighton. It would be desperately inconvenient if we were suddenly obliged to go back to those arrangements—when an ordinary letter cost eightpence to send to London—when the *Times* newspaper itself cost sixpence, and the penny press was unknown. As desperate as if (in order to be well dressed) we had again to have our trousers tightly strapped down over Wellington boots, to wear high black satin cravats, with broad fronts bedecked with several jewelled pins all chained together, with the rest of the unbecoming, uncomfortable, and inconvenient garments in fashion, including a frogged fur-collared frock coat, when our good old sailor king, William the Fourth, with Queen Adelaide on his arm, used to mingle, as I have seen him, with the idlers in East Street and the King's Road. A queer-looking throng they must have been, too; and it is difficult to realize what would be our sensations if we could suddenly pop back and take a peep at the place and the people as they then appeared. Although plenty of the old landmarks still remain intact, such as the "Albion," "York," "Bedford," and "Old Ship" hotels, "Mutton's" (oh, shade of tuck and tarts!), the Chain Pier, and many minor features along the glorious marine front, its general aspect is very different.

The road and causeways all along the line are immensely widened. The sea has been driven back many yards by sturdy groins, whilst the Madeira Road, the Aquarium, those towering hotels the Grand and Metropole, and a host of architectural improvements, seem to me but things of yesterday. Surely it can be but yesterday, or the day before, when the low brown-brick old battery house, as it was called, occupied the site of the said Grand Hotel, and the two pyramidal piles of cannon balls and some big guns stood in front, across the road, in a little sort of toy fortification of their own; and where the one fat old pensioned artilleryman used to run up on to the flagstaff the royal standard on Sundays or high-days and holidays. But yesterday, too, it could only have been when we were wont to

scamper on foot for miles after the Brighton or Brookside harriers, when we had seen the meet at the Race Hill or Devil's Dyke. A little later only too was it, surely, when we enjoyed a taste of hunting over the same ground by hiring a riding-master's hack, and hammering him over the springy turf after the silly dogs, as the Sussex yokels call them, when they fail to afford the crowds of onlookers sufficient sport. Well, we could not run or ride after them at the same pace now, so I must suppose the defalcations of wind and limb must be due to something over which we have no control. Yet so much at home does an old boy like myself feel at Brighton, and so constantly reminded is he by the bright clear air and the briny breeze of the days that are no more, that he must always feel rejuvenated by a prowl along the King's Road. Bicycles, tricycles, modern carriages and buildings, modern garments, modern men and manners, all seem to fade before his strong remembrance of the past—

The near afar off seems,
The distant nigh,
The Now, a dream ; the past—reality

A Buried Sin.

CHAPTER VIII.

FATHER AND DAUGHTER.

THE family at The Friars had just gathered at the breakfast-table, when the post-bag was brought in ; it was on the Friday morning. All hands were outstretched for letters. Claire turned pale, not red, and held out a little nervous hand. She was always half expecting a letter "from papa," though she knew she could not by any possibility receive one yet. She was in a state of high-strung suspense, waiting for news ; and when none came she felt a daily pang of momentary disappointment.

There was a letter for Dolly, and one for Mrs. Blaine. Dolly's face fell as she read ; Mrs. Blaine's brightened.

"Any news, auntie ?" eagerly exclaimed Claire.

"Not what you will call news, dear," she answered. "It is from Ruth. She writes to say that she and her father will be down this evening, and hope to arrive in time for dinner. I don't know how it is, but I always miss Ruth so much ; nothing seems to go right when she is away."

"She saves you all the trouble of housekeeping, auntie," said Claire ; "dear old Ruthie ! she has the regular faculty for governing, and keeps everybody in order. There's never any worry with the servants when she is at home, and when she's away, somehow you seem to be crowded with little bothers."

"Well, Dolly ?" exclaimed Mrs. Blaine inquiringly, seeing that Dolly's eyes were still fixed upon her letter, and when she lifted them it was evident the tears were not far away.

"It's from George, mamma," she answered lugubriously. "His regiment is ordered to Egypt *at once* ; he hopes to be able to run down just for a little half-hour to say good-bye, but is not even sure of that." This announcement that so saddened the one heart gave a throb of gladness to the other. Mrs. Blaine thought it was the very best thing that could happen for all their sakes ; she was rejoiced at the prospect of getting this ineligible lover out of the way ; but she was too wise a woman to run counter to her daughter's feelings by expressing herself aloud.

"It is always so in the army," she said sympathetically ; "these sudden orders to pack up and be off from one end of the world to another at a few hours' notice. It is all very well when a man is single, and can travel like an elephant, with his trunk on his back, but to a married man it is simply ruinous. If I were in your place, Dolly dear, I should be glad, not sorry," she added, with aggravating cheerfulness, "for being on active service, he has a chance of rising ; he may come back a hero—perhaps a general."

In her heart she hoped he would never come back at all—at least, not to The Friars, nor anywhere else where they were domiciled ; but we are poor blind mortals at the best. Man proposes, God disposes ; and while we hug ourselves with the idea that fate is working for us, or that we are successfully working for ourselves, lo ! a sudden turn, and we are brought face to face with what we had never expected ; when we have been looking one way, building airy structures with invisible bricks and mortar, there comes an unexpected side-wind that levels all to the ground, and opens out a prospect we had never thought our eyes would look upon.

In the afternoon Mrs. Blaine and Dolly drove to meet the train by which Mr. and Miss Levison must come, if they hoped to be in time for dinner. Dolly had a double-barrelled idea in accompanying her mother—a thought that not only "dear old Ruth," but perhaps *he* too might come by this train.

They gained the platform some few minutes before the train was due, and paced patiently up and down till it steamed into the station. Mr. and Miss Levison were among the first to alight, and, while they were exchanging greetings, Dolly's eye travelled eagerly down the line of carriages and watched the rest of the passengers alighting ; but the tall, lithe figure of him she sought was not among them. With a kind of forlorn hope, she contrived to keep her little party lingering till the doors were all slammed to and the train steamed slowly out of the station ; then, with a sick heart, she turned away. The quartette descended the stairs, and getting into the chaise which awaited them drove homeward, enjoying the freshness of the country on this bright summer afternoon.

Mr. Levison was a tall, still rather good-looking man, with iron-grey hair ; except for the good looks of which he still retained a remainder, he was the very opposite of his daughter in every way : neither mentally nor physically had they a trait in

common. The features that in her were daintily traced, and but faintly indicated the race whence she sprang, in him were strongly marked. Her complexion was fair and clear; his, dark and sallow. Her light grey eyes were large, frank, and well opened; his, small, dark, and shifty, seldom fully meeting another's gaze. Father and daughter might have come from opposite planets. Perhaps the difference between them was partially accounted for by the fact that she was descended on the mother's side from an ancient family of Greek Jews, who for centuries past had been famous for beauty and the nobler characteristics of their race. Ruth Levison was in face and form, as in heart and mind, cast in the mould of the beautiful and unhappy woman, proud, sensitive, and unequally yoked, who had faded and died a few years after contracting what proved a most ill-assorted union. Isaac Levison, from having always filled a more or less subordinate position in life, had got into the habit of treating everybody with a kind of deference that outran respect, and sometimes degenerated into obsequiousness: a manner which, when it came under Ruth's observation, made her cheek burn; but fortunately she was not often tried thus, as they were domiciled wide apart, she living with the Blaines, and only at intervals visiting her father at Knaresborough. Old Mrs. Thurlowe liked the exaggerated deference of Mr. Levison's tone, and would probably have relished, as a complimentary recognition of her own dignity, the touch of "Uriah Heep" humility in his manner as he bowed and expressed his great sense of Mrs. Blaine's kindness in coming to meet them, "which," he added, "neither I nor Ruth ever expected."

"Speak for yourself, Mr. Levison," exclaimed Dolly, her mercurial spirits leaving her disappointment behind. "Ruth knew we should come on spec.; it was wicked of her, though, not to tell us the exact train."

"I couldn't, dear," answered Ruth; "my father was not quite sure when he would be able to get away."

"It is very kind of you to come at all," said Mrs. Blaine, politely addressing Mr. Levison; "I am sure you must have a great deal to do and to think of." He bowed low.

"A faithful servant has always his work cut out."

"But you are nobody's servant now, Mr. Levison," broke in the impetuous Dolly.

"No, indeed," said Mrs. Blaine, smiling; "poor Uncle Reginald's death has left you quite your own master."

"I don't take it so," he answered deferentially; "I shall transfer my allegiance from the dead to the living members of the family; but whatever I do, I can never requite you, nor feel grateful enough for all your kindness for all these many years to my dear daughter Ruth."

"Don't say that," said Mrs. Blaine, and a tender confidential glance passed between the two ladies; "if the scales were held even, the gratitude would be heavily balanced on our side. Ruth is quite one of us, and I'm afraid bears the heaviest burden in all our household cares and worries. I was afraid that with your changed fortunes you might want to take her from us altogether."

"I should never think of doing that," he answered, "and I don't believe she would care to come." He glanced at his daughter as he spoke. Seeing she made no answering sign, Mrs. Blaine hastened to reply.

"I am sure dear Ruth would always go where duty called her."

"I think duty would have to be trumpet-tongued, and move with a hundred horse-power, before it stirred me from you all," said Ruth. "I am so glad," she added after a momentary pause, "to get back to The Friars; everything was so gloomy and depressing at Knaresborough."

"Poor Ruth! I'm afraid she has had a dull time," rejoined her father, regarding her with a rather curious look in his eyes, "but I have been so much engaged looking after the family affairs. I rather dreaded visiting The Friars, though Ruth said it would be all right."

"Yes," exclaimed Mrs. Blaine, looking inquiringly from one to the other, not quite sure what would "be all right."

"You see you are an exception to the rule, Mrs. Blaine," he continued; "most people so closely connected as you are would resent, perhaps dispute, the generous consideration shown me by the will of my late generous friend and employer, Sir Reginald Thurlowe."

"On the contrary, we all consider it but a just recognition of your long and faithful devotion," said Mrs. Blaine, grudgingly quoting—perhaps not without a lurking grain of sarcasm—her old mother's expressed sentiments; "but I suppose you will let or sell the Lower Grange when Sir Harold comes home?"

There was a world of hidden meaning in her tone as she hazarded the question. He answered her slowly :

" No ; my home and my life are there. I shall stay at the gates of Knaresborough till I die."

Dolly and Ruth were seated on the back seat, exchanging their little bits of news ; Mrs. Blaine relapsed into silence, and Mr. Levison turned his observations on to the state of the weather and the prospect of the coming crops, contrasting the appearance of the corn and barley fields with those of Knaresborough.

They had got within a mile of The Friars when they met Mr. Kent trotting sharply along on his way home to dinner. He beamed joyfully upon the whole party, turned his horse's head, and rode beside them. Scrupulously courteous in his greeting to the ladies, he was profuse in his expressions of pleasure at making Mr. Levison's acquaintance ; in fact, a bystander would have supposed that he had looked forward to this as the crowning consummation of all his desires. In spite of the awkward position, he thrust his whip into his bridle-hand, stretched out the other, and shook Mr. Levison's as though he never meant to leave off, and gave him a cordial invitation to escort the ladies on their visit to Kent House on the morrow—an invitation Mr. Levison was not slow to acknowledge and accept.

It was patent to all eyes that had power to see, that Mr. Kent's interest was concentrated in Ruth ; his unalloyed delight at this unexpected meeting was plainly written all over his face ; he wheeled round to her side of the carriage, and, as far as possible, addressed his conversation to her, and when he was not speaking looked on her with honest loving eyes, that made his rather plain-featured face good to look at.

Mrs. Blaine had been thinking that her daughter Dolly was the chief point of attraction at The Friars, but she realized the true state of affairs to-day, and it must be owned with some slight throe of disappointment ; for, like many mothers, with the best possible intentions, she really believed it was for her daughter's welfare that she thought more of the prosperous condition of outer circumstances than the state of the heart. She had outstript her own youth, buried her own season of romance in a deep grave, and left it so far behind her that she had forgotten all about it, and believed that the love not born before marriage would come to life afterwards—that love pure and simple was a

mere decoration of life, by no means necessary for its happy development. She was sorry to see the man of wealth slipping out of her daughter's hands and falling at the feet of Ruth Levison, but it could not be helped ; Dolly was young—had time before her. Dolly's mother was philosophical, and prepared to make the best of things as they were.

On reaching home she was relieved to find a telegram from Mr. D'Alton which ran thus : "Awfully sorry—impossible to come—start for Egypt at six to-morrow morning—will write." She breathed freely ; so far all was well. With this detrimental lover once off the scene, Dolly would soon get over this fancy, and turn her thoughts to "fresh woods and pastures new." Did she gauge her daughter's heart aright ? Did it never strike her that the soldier away, sword in hand, fighting on the battle-field, cutting his way to fame and fortune, his imagined heroism, his positive dangers—the perils that hourly threaten his life—ever present to the woman's mind, keeping up her excitement and interest to the highest point—this far-away hero is a more fascinating object in his absence than he would be in the mere matter-of-fact surroundings of daily life ?

Mr. Levison, too, watched the play of the unconscious Reginald's face with eagle eyes, and, like Macbeth, he saw "the future on the instant," and set his wits to work wondering, little thinking where his wondering would lead him. "Who was this man ? He was of some consequence evidently—a rough diamond, though ; not a gem of the first water." No, he saw that at a glance ; he knew the polish that good breeding and the constant mixing in good society give to a man, and here it was conspicuous by its absence. Mr. Kent's manner was of the kindly, rough and ready description ; his voice was vulgarly loud, his grammar shaky ; when he spoke quickly he had a struggle with his h's, caught them with difficulty, and put them in their right places with a laboured aspiration ; sometimes in his haste he put one in a wrong place, or perhaps even dropped it altogether, and never stopped to pick it up. The friends who knew him well took no notice of these little peculiarities—they were lost in the large-hearted generous nature ; but in the course of ten minutes' conversation Mr. Levison noted every outward sign.

The first time he found himself alone with his daughter, which happened to be on that evening, he took the opportunity of inquiring :

"Ruth, my dear, who was the gentleman who rode home with us this afternoon?"

"Mr. Kent, father, the owner of a large factory a few miles off."

"A rich man, eh?"

"Reported so," she answered; "indeed, I believe he is. He has built a beautiful house on the side of the hill over there; you can see it in the distance if you come this way." She led him to a point where at least the chimney-pots could be seen. "He lives there with his widowed mother; she has another son, who is an engineer and lives in London." She laughed as she added, "I have given you the family history in a few words; now you know as much about them as we do."

"And he is a special friend of yours, eh, Ruth?" suggested her father.

"Of mine! certainly not," she answered quickly; "he is a friend of the family—he is a good fellow, and we all like him very much."

"Of course you do; a poor beggar's no good to anybody. I am glad he is a rich man."

"Why should you be either glad or sorry? What are his riches to us?" she rejoined.

"Everything," he answered, looking searchingly into her face. "I'm not blind, and though I can't exactly see through a mill-stone, I can see enough to know that if you play your cards well, my girl, you may have the fingering of his money."

"Don't speak of such a thing," exclaimed Ruth, startled and annoyed by the suggestion. "Mr. Kent has no more thought of me than I of him," but she blushed a little as she said it, for she was not quite so sure that she could answer so for Mr. Kent. "Please leave me out of this kind of speculation," she added.

"But, Ruth, my dear," he said in an insinuating voice, "you will not think of these things for yourself, and it is time you did; you are no longer a girl, but you are a very handsome woman, and ought to do well for yourself."

"I am doing well," she answered; "I am living a useful life with people I love and who love me."

"Chut, chut," he rejoined impatiently; "I want you to do well in a different fashion."

"Your idea of 'doing well' would be to tie me to a sack of money and let me die under the weight of it," she said bitterly.

"No, no, my dear, to *live* in the luxury and happiness that money only can give. You are very obstinate, Ruth—that is your one great fault; and you have always stood in your own light. Be wise now. If we work together we shall work to some purpose. I only ask you to make the best of your opportunities. Why, I could see at a glance that if you only have the tact of any ordinary woman, you may twist this big burly fellow round your finger!"

"I have no desire to twist any man round my finger," said Ruth wearily, "and it is not right, father, to speak in such terms of a man whom you only saw to-day, and whose hospitality you will enjoy to-morrow. And please don't connect my name with that of any man; it is all no use. My life is my own, and I have a right to do as I will with it."

"So far you have done foolishly. Let me look in your face, Ruth," he added, with slow deliberation. "I believe, I really do believe, you have not forgotten *him*! You have still a hankering after the good-looking family scapegrace."

"You use offensive words, father," she said, her colour rising. "If you mean that I have not forgotten the only friend my miserable childhood knew—the brave handsome boy who found me when I was lost, who was always kind to the poor motherless child you cruelly neglected—then you are right! I have *not* forgotten him; he was my hero then, and will be my hero till I die."

Her words galled and enraged him. He looked as if he could have struck her on the mouth—her devotion to the unfortunate was an old grievance between them—but he only answered with a dry laugh:

"You have chosen a fine hero truly; your 'handsome boy' has developed into an unsuccessful forger. Think of him as he has been for many years past, serving his term of penal servitude, with his hair cropped close, in the prison dress, working with a gang of thieves and burglars—the lowest class of criminals."

"I think, and have thought all these years, of the strong crushed heart of the hero and martyr beneath that prison dress," she answered. "No compelled association with the evil-minded and vicious can stain a noble soul like his."

"Noble!" chuckled the old man.

"Yes, noble," she repeated. Now it was her turn. She stopped suddenly in their walk, and lifted her clear true eyes to his face.

"It *is* noble to have struggled for all these years to keep his strong heart from breaking—to bear the burden of another's crime, and work and labour and live under it! But he is coming home now, we trust. Sir Harold Thurlowe is coming home to clear his good name and—"

"If he comes, he is coming home a broken man, disgraced beyond redemption. If he lives, he may be only coming home to die," the father hissed into the daughter's ears.

"Life and death are in God's hands—not ours," she answered, gazing sternly in his dark face. She heard Dolly's voice calling her, and saw her slight form at the lighted window as she peered out through the twilight shadows.

"Ruth! Ruth! where are you? Tea is waiting."

"Coming, dear, coming," Ruth answered, and hurried towards the house, followed slowly by her father, and shivering as she went. She felt some invisible evil was stirring against those she loved.

CHAPTER IX.

THE FÊTE AT KENT HOUSE.

IT was a glorious summer morning; everything that sun and sky and breeze and blossoms could do to favour the scene of Mr. Kent's festivities was done. No clouds veiled the jolly old face of the sun; all smiles and light, it blazed like burnished gold; and the balmy breeze, laden with the sweet scent of the clover, joined the bees in their raid upon the gorgeous flowers which were all abloom in the wilderness.

The village was astir early; everybody was on the tip-toe of expectation; they had been looking forward to this day for weeks past; it was a great occasion in their monotonous lives. The one general shop in the village had been doing a thriving trade in the way of flowers and ribbons and lace, for all the women were anxious to smarten themselves and their children to the highest possible pitch. Never was there such a combination of impossible flowers and gaudy ribbons illustrating the agricultural taste! No wonder Mr. Kent was popular; he did not confine his hospitalities to his own workpeople; all the poor folk in the neighbourhood were welcome to their share of the feast. Those who, in consequence of their employment, were compelled to live near the factory, came trooping across the fields and along the

lanes early, determined to make a day of it, disporting themselves in straggling masses all along the country side. The merry voices of the children and the chatter of men and women, loosed for that one bright day from their monotonous, laborious life, filled the air, and it did the heart good to hear them.

Both within and without the gates of Kent House everything was lively; everybody was busy, masters and servants alike preparing for every other body's enjoyment.

Two o'clock was the hour fixed for a substantial meal to be served; then the fun and frolic were to begin. The ladies from The Friars, bringing Mr. Levison in their train, arrived long before that hour, and occupied themselves in laying the tables, decorating them, and giving a finishing touch here and there. The mistress of the house was unfortunately confined to her room with a severe and sudden attack of neuralgia, for which Reginald had stoutly, but vainly, recommended a liver pill. Probably she was not sorry to delegate her authority to such capable hands as those of Mrs. Blaine and her party. Mr. Kent was evidently well satisfied with the arrangement. His jolly face grew redder than ever; and, beaming with smiles, he wandered to and fro clumsily, getting into everybody's way, and in his desire to do something helpful generally managed to do something wrong. Presently he fell into Ruth's hands, and she employed him, not in the pretty fancy work of a festal occasion, but in a useful matter-of-fact way, giving him piles of plates to carry here, pointing out a bench to be moved there, chairs to fill this or that gap, and, rushing hither and thither under her orders, he was happy. Meanwhile Algernon and Claire managed to get lost in the wilderness, and were content and happy in a less useful kind of way; they were a long time before they could find their way back.

About half-past one o'clock the volunteer band that had been engaged from the county town came marching through the village, quite in martial style, playing a stirring tune, and, followed by a score of the invited guests, they entered the hospitable gates of Kent House, where the master of the house, his family and friends waited to receive them, and had a cheery word, a smile, or a hand-shake for every one. The band established itself on a conveniently selected spot and played the "Roast Beef of Old England," and other popular well-known tunes, while the multi-

tude fed on the good and substantial things that were abundantly set before them. There was no lack of good feeling, good appetites and general merriment as they heartily fell to.

The genial host addressed his humble friends by their several names, and made each man and woman feel as though he or she was the most favoured guest. The visitors from The Friars and elsewhere were pressed into the service of attending to the tables, and the quartette of ladies acquitted themselves so well in their new capacity as waiting-maids, that they covered themselves with social glory, fluttering hither and thither, attending to or anticipating the wants of everybody with cheerful alacrity. Animated by the occasion, and infected by the general gaiety, Mr. Kent waxed humorous, and was surprised by his own hitherto undeveloped powers of entertaining.

When the tables were cleared, contrary to his usual custom, he embarked on the tide of eloquence, and made a speech, which was quite as good as after-dinner speeches generally are, even when they are made by better men and on more aristocratic occasions. Most important of all, it was appropriate to the occasion, and went straight to the hearts of his hearers ; and when a speech does that it has done its work well ; indeed, Mr. Kent was quite affected by it himself ; his voice was rather husky when he sat down and received the congratulations of immediate surroundings, amid the deafening cheers of his people. Then the head man proposed the master's health, and there was such a clinking of glasses and "hip ! hip ! hurrahing !" as they insisted on drinking it with three times three! How each one seemed to love the sound of his own voice, and tried to lift it above his neighbour's! Simultaneously they broke out into the chorus, "For he's a jolly good fellow," and everybody shook hands with everybody else in the most enthusiastic fashion.

The exciting business of eating and drinking over, the company separated ; each went his own way. There was no lack of amusements : varied athletic sports and games for the men, Punch and Judy and a new kind of "Aunt Sally" for the children, some of whom elected to play merry-go-rounds on the grass. The women found a restful pleasure in lounging under the trees in little gossiping parties, listening to the music and watching their husbands and children at their more vigorous enjoyments.

The loftier portion of the community, having done their duty so far, retreated into the house to enjoy their afternoon tea. The drawing-room windows overlooked the grounds, so that they could see the merrymakers and hear the band playing. Mrs. Kent was unable to appear among her son's guests in the drawing-room ; of course her absence was regretted in a mild matter-of-fact sort of way. Mr. Levison observed all that was going on with lynx-eyed watchfulness, taking in every detail, and morally feeling the pulse of the people of all sorts and conditions ; no trifling circumstance nor distinctive feature escaped his notice. Vicariously, too, he enjoyed the popularity of his daughter Ruth, who, he observed, was everybody's friend and favourite. He was also highly gratified by the attention he received from Mr. Kent, who devoted himself to the man he had selected for his father-in-law.

He invited him to come for a smoke, and they strolled through the garden and orchard, chatting pleasantly by the way, bending their heads as they passed beneath the laden branches of the fruit trees, which promised a rich crop when the time should come for the gathering. Signs of prosperity and plenty were visible on all sides. The corn and barley fields were a brilliant mass of golden grain ; no blighted ears lifted their heads among their healthier brothers, and no rascally weeds, scarlet poppies, or such like, dared show their intrusive faces there. Mr. Levison's agricultural faculties were awake to the excellent condition of everything he saw, and he was not slow in expressing his admiration of those arrangements which everywhere spoke of the master's superintending care. He even praised the original manner in which the garden was laid out, and the commingling there of flowers and fruit, which he ventured to pronounce ornamental as well as utilitarian.

"Yes," exclaimed Mr. Kent, putting his hands in his pockets and swaggering along with pardonable pomposity ; "I flatter myself I know a thing or two. Not many of the gentry in these parts know as much of their own concerns as I do of mine. They leave things to the management of people whose interest it is to serve themselves rather than their masters. Now, I keep an eye upon everything. No dodging behind haystacks when I am around. I know what I want done, and I see that my people do it. That's about the way I've gained my success in everything. I've climbed with my own hands and feet, never on other people's

shoulders, for I'm not ashamed to own I'm a self-made man—successful, too, very." Of course Mr. Levison observed that that was an evident fact (the success, he meant) that could not be disputed, adding that if every man had similar materials for self-manufacture there would be a speedy improvement in all human kind.

They next proceeded to look over the farm buildings, and Mr. Kent showed him his cattle, his pigs, and his poultry, and was much gratified by his freely expressed appreciation of those several objects, and the profound admiration he avowed for everything he saw.

" You have a splendid property, sir," said Mr. Levison deferentially. His respectful attitude tickled Mr. Kent's self-esteem, for, in spite of his constant assertion that " he was a self-made man," he was strongly imbued with the " pride that apes humility," and liked to be looked up to, especially to stand on a glorified eminence in the sight of Ruth's father. " It is all so compact and perfect," Mr. Levison added ; " quite a model of what such a place should be. You seem to have everything the heart of man can desire or soul conceive."

" No, not everything," said Mr. Kent ; and, moved by a sudden impulse, he stopped short and faced about. " I admit I have got a great deal, but to make me completely happy there is still one thing wanting."

" It would puzzle a conjurer to find out what that one thing can be," rejoined Mr. Levison.

" And *you* can help me get it, Mr. Levison," Reginald added, determined to make no bones about the matter.

" *I!* How?" exclaimed Mr. Levison in surprised accents.

" Well, I'm not going to beat about the bush—it isn't my way," resumed Mr. Kent. " You must have seen—everybody sees—that I'm sweet on your daughter Ruth, and if I could get her for a wife I should be the happiest man in creation—I don't care where the other fellow is."

" My daughter, sir!" exclaimed Mr. Levison. " You take away my breath! I am sure you have only to speak, and my Ruth will feel fully sensible of the honour you do her."

" Honour be blowed!" said Mr. Kent emphatically. " I know I'm not good enough for her ; but no man ever would be, so she may as well have me as another. I've lived all these years and

never fancied one woman more than another, till I met with *her*; then I went to pieces all at once, and made up my mind there and then to get her if I could."

"If she is as sensible a woman as my daughter ought to be, I don't think you'll find much difficulty."

"I'm not so sure, of that," said Mr. Kent, shaking his head sapiently. "She suits me down to the ground; but I'm not so sure about *my* suiting her. Women are queer kettle cattle, and don't always know what's good for 'em. Look here, Mr. Levison, as her father, you'll naturally be anxious about the man she marries. Well, I don't think any man, or woman either, has got anything against *me*. I'm a Liberal and a good Churchman. I believe everything I ought to believe—and that's saying something in these heathenish times—" Suddenly calling to mind Mr. Levison's race and creed, he felt that by so stoutly asserting his own views he might have hurt his feelings, so he hastened to add apologetically, "Not that *I* care what a man's race or religion is, though I'm glad to be an Englishman and a Christian myself; but that's neither here nor there. Whatever a man's religion is, I say let him stick to it. Whether he worships a cow in India, a cat in China, or fire or water in any other outlandish place, that's his own affair, and no man has a right to interfere with another's faith. Right or wrong, it's his own funeral." He winked violently and irreverently, and poked his selected father-in-law in the ribs, adding, "So it will be all right about Ruth. Nothing of race or religion shall stand between us—she may go her way to glory, I shall go mine; and I dare say we shall come to the same gate in the end. For my part, I think whatever religion you're brought up to, that's the right religion for *you*, whatever it might be for anybody else. I'm a Liberal all round, I am."

"It is not often we meet a man with such enlightened views as yours, sir," replied Mr. Levison; "it does my heart good to hear you! Some people—yes, many—have a prejudice against our race; they call us money-grubbers."

"Well, if you are, you know what to do with your money when you've got it. That's all right," laughed Mr. Kent. "But that's all nonsense in these days. It is only the ignorant who indulge in prejudices of any sort. I always say 'A good Jew is better than a bad Christian' any day, and I hope we shall be able to harness our horses and trot over the course together."

" You are very kind ; I really don't know how to express my gratitude ; but I sincerely hope we shall be able to arrange things to your satisfaction."

" Of course I'm willing to come down handsome, you know," added Mr. Kent. " As for money and all that, I'm a pretty warm man. I can hang my wife with diamonds as you hang a turkey with sausages ! If you'll back me up and help me to make things square, Ruth's house," he nodded towards his mansion—" and it isn't one to be ashamed of—will always be yours ; a knife and fork and the best room always at your service. I can't say more than that, can I ?"

Mr. Levison professed himself not only well satisfied, but highly flattered ; in fact, Mr. Kent had said a great deal more than he expected him to say. His heart swelled with pride as he cast his eyes round him, and thought, " All this is mine and *hers*, if she wills ! It is impossible she can refuse ; she wouldn't be such a fool as that."

His brow darkened at the idea, for he was doubtful, very doubtful, as to what Ruth would decide. She had not his greed for gold, his hankering after riches and power ; she rated pure and simple happiness far above either, and thought a life of usefulness better than one of luxury, with all its tempting, too often disastrous, indulgences ; but he determined to bring all the engineering forces of his mind to bear upon hers, and turn her round about till he set her in the direction where he willed that she should go. He knew that he should have much delicate manipulation and skilful handling of his daughter's spirit before he would gain his desire ; but he would be wary and patient, and not mind through what intricate winding ways he passed—nor, for the matter of that, through what mud he waded—so that he got his desire at last.

As he and Mr. Kent walked and talked, and smoked the pipe of peace together, they were unconscious of the scrutiny they were undergoing. A pair of eyes were watching them with an interest they little dreamed of. Mrs. Kent sat in an easy chair at her bed-room window, fixing her attention upon them with unaccountable interest, considering that Mr. Levison was a stranger, and this was his first visit to her son's house.

She was stirred by a presentiment that evil days were coming for her and hers. She knew what to fear, and, knowing, might

perhaps avoid the worst. Everything seemed to be crowding into their lives at once. Sir Reginald Thurlowe's death, the expected return of his nephew Harold, and now the unlooked-for appearance of Mr. Levison upon the scene! All events seemed focussing to her destruction. Then her son Reginald, in his straightforward way, seemed to be walking into a net that would entangle his feet and trip him up when he fancied he was on the safest level ground.

She held a long consultation, herself with herself, and changed and shifted her ideas, as if they were pawns on a mental chess-board, and took a long time to consider what move to make, so as not to place herself in jeopardy.

She sat there pondering on things that had been, things that were, and what might be to come. She seemed to be drifting into a blind alley—groping in the dark. The dark crept over the landscape and the night closed in. The sound of the music died; the band noisily packed up its instruments and departed. The merry voices dwindled till only the merest echo reached her ears; guests and visitors went their several ways; the gates clanged to and left Kent House to its solitary grandeur. Every one who passed out carried with them pleasant memories to feast upon for many days. Still Mrs. Kent never moved. She sat there staring into the darkness as she had stared into the light. Soon her sons burst into the room in the highest of high spirits, bringing with them the news of the day's doings.

"Holloa!" exclaimed Reginald's cheery voice as he crossed the threshold. "All in the dark! Mother, where are you?"

"Here!" and the shadowy form rose from the window and came slowly forward.

"Sorry we couldn't find time to scamper up to see you before. Neuralgia better, eh?"

"Yes, much better."

"Ah! that's all right. Wish it had been better before. They were all so sorry not to see you, and we've had such a glorious day, mother—glorious! I made a speech! I dare say it will be in the paper to-morrow, for I saw old Sparkes dodging about picking up crumbs for the curious."

He "washed his hands with invisible soap in imperceptible water" as he half whispered in her ear:

"I think it will be all right between me and Ruth now. Her

father's down here. I've spoken to him, and he's all on my side ! What do you say to that ?"

"I say, God bless my son," she answered slowly.

CHAPTER X.

A PRACTICAL SUITOR.

THE next morning Reginald Kent was up and off to the factory before his usual time ; he had a great deal of business to attend to, for that day was one set apart for special interviews with his managers, when he looked over fresh contracts, ratified old ones, and went over mercantile matters with a scrupulously careful eye, deciding what was to be done and what left undone. He seemed to be divided into two selves. At the factory he was the energetic man of business, whose keen eye and shrewd calculations nothing escaped ; his very soul seemed impregnated through and through with dry-as-dust business matters ; his ambition, and all earthly interests, bounded by those factory walls ; but he seemed to change his nature when he put off his office clothes, and the other self came forth in the shape of the easy-going, tennis-playing, genial individual who took delight in the simplest pleasures, and seemed to have no thought or care beyond the social hour.

He used to boast that in business matters he never made a mistake, and so far he hadn't. He never lost a contract, nor ever failed to carry out one that he had once made. Of course, in all business relations there must be a certain amount of risk, but he was wary, and chanced less than most men in his position ; if the probabilities were on the side of unsatisfactory result, he passed the matter over and left it to less prudent and more enterprising hands. His managers and his people worked with him ; he made them feel that they, one and all, had a share in his prosperity ; hence he generally scored success. He held the scales of justice even ; there was no favouritism, no pulling strings with him ; he held them all in his own hand. If there was any dispute, any dissatisfaction among the men, he stepped to the fore and set it right.

He got through his business on this day without a hitch anywhere. As he came to the factory earlier in the morning, he left earlier in the evening, mounted his cob, and trotted off to The

Friars, there to transact what he hoped would be the pleasantest bit of business of his life. Since his interview with Mr. Levison he had grown more self-confident ; hitherto, he had felt shy and sheepish, so far as his bluff nature could feel sheepish, in the presence of his divinity ; his courage oozed out at his finger tips ; he could not compel his lips to frame into words the desire of his heart. He had more than once left home for The Friars well primed, ready to fire off his proposal into Ruth's ears, but when they stood face to face he lost his backbone, grew limp and nerveless, and fired off blank cartridges—mere commonplace phrases which any man might say to any woman, not at all what he intended to say to Ruth Levison.

Now, since he had got her father on his side—his firm ally—he felt braced up, and disposed to march fearlessly to the attack. No doubt her father had already prepared her for his visit, and he would find his task easy—for it is sometimes a very difficult one for a man to propose to the woman he loves without some preliminaries, some opportunities of mentally feeling the lady's pulse, that he may judge his chances of success. Reginald Kent never saw Ruth alone : she was either with some of the family or engaged in some household duties which were not conducive to the practice of love-making in the most elementary stage, so he had no opportunity for climbing into her favour by easy steps. He felt it was a little awkward to have to plump an unexpected proposal straight at a lady's head, but that was what he had got to do, and he would not leave it for another day undone. He marched direct to The Friars, up to the hall door, rang the bell, and, instead of asking for Mrs. Blaine, inquired, "If he could see Miss Levison ?"

The ladies were all in the morning-room, engaged in their several occupations, when his message was brought in.

"What on earth can Mr. Kent want with Ruth ?" exclaimed Claire, letting her hands fall upon the keys of the piano she was playing.

"I think I can guess," said Mrs. Blaine, with a peculiar smile.

"Perhaps his mother isn't well, or wants some recipe or knitting pattern—she's a great worker, I believe," said Ruth, laying aside her work.

"Likely she'd send to us if she did !" exclaimed Dolly ; "she hates us like poison."

"You've no right to say that, Dorothy," said Ruth; "you've never spoken to her."

"And I don't want to," pouted Dolly.

"I don't believe you have ever *seen* her, except in church," rejoined Claire, who didn't like any one belonging to Algernon to be disrespectfully spoken of.

"That's quite enough. She looks so sour—like a walking vinegar cruet with the stopper out."

"I don't agree with you," said Ruth. "Very unlike her sons, *she* looks as though she had known some great sorrow: sad, grave, and stern—not sour."

"I wonder what he can want with you?" said Claire.

"Perhaps I had better go and see," she answered, rising and leaving the room.

"My opinion is that he has come to propose to Ruth," announced Claire solemnly.

"That shows his good sense," said Mrs. Blaine, who had determined, if the golden apple had really fallen at Ruth's feet instead of Dolly's, to accept the position with a good grace. "If he wants a wife, he would never find a more perfect woman than our dear Ruth."

"What can he want with a wife? he has got a mother," exclaimed Dolly in disgusted tones.

"That is not exactly the same thing," observed Mrs. Blaine.

"You may just as well ask why somebody else we know should be wanting a wife," exclaimed Claire slyly. "He's doubly provided with father and mother both."

"That is quite another affair," said Dorothy, blushing as red as a peony; "*he* loves me."

"And why should not Mr. Kent love somebody else?"

"It is ridiculous to connect the idea of *love* with him," said Dolly. "He's so fat, and red, and ugly."

"Ugliness is a relative term," said Mrs. Blaine. "What is ugly in one person's eyes is beautiful in another's. The plainest people are generally the most fascinating; beauty has really very little to do with love, and I am sorry to hear any daughter of mine make such a silly speech." Claire saw that a little sermon was imminent, and hastened to intercept it, exclaiming merrily:

"And *I* never heard that fat smothered the affections, nor that red cheeks barred the way." Dorothy couldn't bear to see her

mother look the least grave—she rushed over to her and gave her a hug.

"You know I don't mean half I say," she began.

"I hope you don't," returned her mother, "for you say a great many foolish things, and I hope you'll not worry Ruth with your foolish sayings."

"What I mean is," exclaimed Dorothy, coming down to a plain matter-of-fact level, "that Mr. Kent is the last man in the world I should have thought matrimonially inclined; I always regarded him as a confirmed old bachelor—and as for our Ruth, she's a world too good for him. A wife, indeed! What he wants is a domestic article to look after his cook and his boot-polish, just as we want a patent mangle or sewing-machine."

"It will be amusing," said Claire, "if all our speculations end in smoke, and we have dragged the poor man's name through the mire for nothing, and he has no thought of Ruth after all."

While they were thus discoursing and wondering, Ruth went into the drawing-room, where Mr. Kent awaited her. He came forward beaming, though perhaps slightly embarrassed for the moment, and after a little hand-shake and usual "How d'ye do's," he took a moral header, and plunged into the matter at once.

"I hope you didn't mind my asking for you," he said, "but, you see, nobody else would have done in this case."

"No!" she ejaculated half inquiringly.

"I suppose your father has spoken to you about this?" he continued confidentially.

"He has spoken to me a great deal on many matters," replied Ruth, "but what is the special 'this' that you refer to?"

"Well—about *me*! There, I may as well get it over at once. It isn't my way to beat about the bush, and *he's* agreeable if *you* are!" he jerked his head as if in some direction where he supposed Mr. Levison to be. She looked at him still with a puzzled expression, as though her thoughts were still wide of the mark. She did not yet understand, though she was beginning to have an inkling of what he was driving at.

"See, here's just how it is," he continued. "You must see that I'm very much interested in you, more interested than it is comfortable for a fellow to be, unless it's mutual, and the lady is interested too, don't you see?"

"Certainly I see," answered Ruth.

"Then is it so?" he inquired. "Only you just say it is reciprocal, and we'll strike the bargain." Ruth had a hazy notion that she was receiving a proposal, but it was clothed in such ambiguous language she hardly knew how to answer it, seeing that he never mentioned the word "love," or made any allusion to the state of his affections. He waited; she must answer, and did so in the best way she could.

"You are very kind, Mr. Kent," she said, "and I hope I do reciprocate the interest any of my friends are good enough to feel for me."

"I hope there's not many that feel the same sort of interest that I do," he rejoined. "The fact is—what I want you to understand is, that I want you for my wife, Ruth—I may call you 'Ruth,' may I not?"

"If you like," she answered, "but you must never expect me to be anything more than your friend 'Ruth.'"

"As for that, I don't believe in 'not expecting.' If a fellow goes on expecting, pegging away in the right place, he'll get what he wants at last, and—I've been wanting to say this to you for a long time past—you suit me from the crown of your head to the sole of your foot, and if I suit you similar, why, it's all right, and I shall make you a good husband, never jib or ride restive; you shall have as many fal-lals and bonnets as you like, and I'll never grudge the milliner's bills. Say, now, is it all straight?"

"I am sure you are one of the kindest and best men in the world, Mr. Kent," answered Ruth, giving him her hand with a most kindly smile; "I quite appreciate the compliment you pay me, and I am sure you will make the very best of husbands, but not to *me*!"

"For the matter of that, I shall never make a good one, nor a bad one either, to anybody else; but why won't you have me?" he added quite lugubriously. "I don't suppose you care much about me just now—you've had no chance to—but if you like me just a little the rest will all come, when we are once together, and you see how devoted I am, for I am that fond of you, Ruth—and I don't care who knows it—I would lie down and let your dainty little feet walk over me, and like it, so I would."

Men are rather fond of suggesting that uncomfortable mode of locomotion to their beloved. Is the figure of speech intended to

illustrate the height of their affections or the depth of their humility?

"Please don't talk so, you pain me!" she exclaimed. "I am very, very sorry if I have hurt your feelings; but this has come upon me so unexpectedly."

"That's exactly how it is," he interrupted eagerly; "I ought not to have taken you by surprise. You can't decide on a matter like this in a minute—of course not. Well, take a little time to think it over."

"I'm afraid no amount of time will make any difference in my feelings," she rejoined.

"Oh, you don't know! time works wonders," he said; "only I want to get on the line and see the wedding-ring ahead!"

"Please give up the idea; Mr. Kent," she answered; "I'm afraid things cannot be arranged as you seem to wish."

"Not to-day perhaps, nor to-morrow, but by-and-by? A jury never decides anything at once; it takes time to consider its verdict; you must take time to consider yours. I don't want to hurry you, but I'm sure you'll say '*Yes*' one day. A man's a fool to take a woman's '*No*' for an answer right off."

"He will be a wise man who takes mine," she answered, "and will save himself and me a world of trouble! For your sake, as well as for mine, I wish you had not spoken, but you'll soon get over this little disappointment."

"As an eel gets over skinning," he said lugubriously; "I'd so set my heart on you. I'm awfully cut up just now, but mind, I'm not going to give up," he added more briskly; "I don't give up! After a little while I shall try again. I can't think what possible objection you can have. It seems incredible that you can prefer being—well, living here as you are—to being your own mistress, my mistress, everybody's mistress. Why, you might ride rough-shod over everything at Kent House!"

"It is not my desire to ride rough-shod over anything or anybody," said Ruth, smiling on her matter-of-fact wooer. Then, by an adroit turn in the conversation, she managed to shunt his ideas from his matrimonial vexations to the glories of Kent House, and the great success of yesterday's entertainment, both congenial topics to him, though he would occasionally hark back to the subject nearest his heart. He loved to talk about himself and his belongings, not arrogantly, but in a boyish simple fashion, which

robbed boastfulness of any offensive quality. Seizing the first convenient opportunity, she inquired if he would not come into the morning-room, where they would now be having tea? but he said "No," he wasn't in spirits to see people—he would see the rest of the family to-morrow, when Algy was coming to bid "Good-bye" to Claire, as he was obliged to return to town in the evening. Mr. Kent left the house not in quite such high spirits as he entered it, temporarily disappointed certainly, but by no means despondent, for he resolved, as he tersely put it, to "stick on."

As Ruth re-entered the morning-room, Mrs. Blaine looked up inquiringly, Claire smiled, and Dolly sprang to her side, saying eagerly, "Well?"

"Well," reiterated Ruth, who had no idea of making family capital out of her rejected suitor.

"What did he say? what did he want?" continued Dolly.

"To talk over a very prosaic matter, that wouldn't be at all interesting to you, dear." Answering Mrs. Blaine's mute inquiry, Ruth added, "He came in consequence of—of a conversation he had with my father yesterday."

"It was about you, Ruth—it could not possibly have been about anything else," Dolly broke in eagerly. "Well!" she added emphatically, "if a man dared to propose to *my* father—if I had one—before he proposed to *me*, I'd have his hair off and send him back into the world like a bald-headed monkey!"

"Dolly, Dolly!" exclaimed Mrs. Blaine, quite angrily—a wonder for her, who, as a rule, "blew neither hot nor cold"—"where do you pick up your slang expressions? You don't find them in the dictionary, I am sure, nor hear them from any of our circle."

"These slang phrases are very expressive, mamma; they are some of the few good things we import from the New World—like Topsy, 'I expect they grow' there; but do let Ruth speak! I'm dying to hear all about it—did you say 'yes'? And are you really going to be married?"

"If I were, you would be among the first to hear it, Dolly," answered Ruth, smiling; "but my inclination does not lie in that direction. I'm afraid you'll have me on hand here for an indefinite time."

"Put in plain words, that means you have refused him—isn't

that what you wish us to understand?" said Dolly, clinging persistently to her point.

"I do not wish you to understand anything of the kind," answered Ruth, "and I think we may as well leave Mr. Kent's name out of our discussion."

Mrs. Blaine came to the rescue.

"You are as inquisitive as a chattering magpie—and I really think it is extremely bad taste, Dolly, to push inquiries into a matter upon which Ruth very properly desires to be reticent. I think she is quite right not to put any man she respects at the mercy of your saucy tongue."

That evening, during dinner, casual mention was made of Mr. Kent's visit in the afternoon, and Mr. Levison cast a searching glance upon his daughter's face; but it told him nothing. So far as any matter which interested him was concerned, it was a blank. She avoided any opportunity of being alone with him, for intercourse between this father and daughter was not generally of the most agreeable description; the two natures seemed antagonistic one to the other—strangely so, considering their close relationship. His opinions clashed with hers, and however pacific was the beginning of an interview, the jarring elements blew up strong before the end of it. However, he found an opportunity to exchange a few words before they parted for the night.

"Was I not a true prophet?" he whispered in her ear. "Mr. Kent has been here! What have you got to tell me?" She lifted her eyes calmly to his as she answered:

"Nothing. Good-night." She lighted her candle and slowly ascended the stairs. Her coolness always enraged him. A dark frown gathered on his brow, and he glanced after her tall stately figure as she went up the stairs.

"Fool!" he muttered between his closed lips. "If ever he comes back, *he* shall pay for this!"

(To be continued.)

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APRIL 1892.

The Countess Pharamond.

(A SEQUEL TO "SHEBA.")

By "rita,"

Author of "GRETCHEN," "THE LAIRD o' COCKPEN," "SHEBA," etc., etc.

Book II.

CHAPTER III.

"FAR FROM THE MADDING CROWD."

LIGHTS were flashing, cabs rattling, link-boys shouting, and the inhabitants of Shekelton Terrace were made aware by these significant sounds that Mrs. Matthew Levy was giving one of her celebrated entertainments. Under the striped awning a continuous stream of black coats and gorgeous dresses passed into the house. Being there relieved of wraps and overcoats, the owners of the said attire flashed brilliantly forth in startling raiment and gleaming jewels. Diamonds sparkled everywhere. On snowy shirt-fronts and massive busts, on powdered necks and bare arms and ungloved fingers. They crowned the ebon tresses of portly matrons, and glistened among the curls and plaits of young wives. They blazed on shoulder-straps and stomachers, and coiled serpent-like around plump wrists; they did their best to cover vast tracts of unclothed flesh, and struggled manfully to display themselves wherever apparel was, or was *not*.

It was a brave show, and spoke eloquently of vast fortunes amassed by honest labour and patient industry. A show that held encouragement to young beginners who still looked doubtfully on the prospects of *bric-a-brac*, considered as a business, or spoke slightly of emporiums for clothing, or the profits of "misfits," or the wisdom of supplying the worst articles at the highest price obtainable from the innocent and unwary.

A brave show indeed! A sight that made Mrs. Matthew Levy's heart glow with gratified pride as the glistening silks

trailed over her drawing-room carpet, and the powdered beauties paraded their bedizened persons under her glittering chandeliers.

Mrs. Levison sat in a corner with Dolly by her side, and looked enviously at this parade of wealth. The advance of age had only brought out in a fuller degree the worst side of her nature.

She bitterly resented her own unexpected descent from wealth to poverty. She felt enraged as she looked out on, or mingled in scenes like the present, that her own superior advantages of birth and breeding—not to mention religion—were quite unrecognized where money reigned supreme.

She did not under-estimate the power or value of the god of Judaism. How was it possible to do so when it could command such luxury and comfort as she daily witnessed? But in her heart she despised its worshippers even while she envied them.

No one ever took much notice of her at these entertainments. She was generally regarded as a poor invalid relative whom the Levys, in kindness of heart, were supporting. The fact of her being poor and not "one of us," as Mrs. Levy contemptuously observed, was not conducive to popularity. She was only there on sufferance—a truth Sheba had long recognized, but which her mother obstinately refused to acknowledge. She still persisted in dressing herself in a style she could ill afford, a style unsuitable also to the ravages of illness and time, and appearing in the drawing-rooms on all festive occasions like the present.

Mrs. Matthew Levy was very good-natured, and though she did not like her brother's wife or forgive him for his folly in marrying a Christian, and a penniless Christian to boot, she yet did not visit those errors on the offender. An extra inmate or two made very little difference to the household at No. 5, Shekelton Terrace, and Mrs. Levison must learn to like fried fish and cosher meat, and reconcile herself to accepting sandwiches in which fragments of the toothsome "porker" had no place. She always invited her to be present at her parties, indeed she loved to display her importance and the wealth of her friends to this outsider, and Mrs. Levison always accepted the invitations and hid her jealousy and heart-burnings under an appearance of enjoyment she was far from feeling.

But Sheba could not do this.

She was the same plain-spoken, impetuous, intolerant girl whose youth had been so misjudged—whose nature so warped—

whose love so tragic. Any loss, any suffering to herself, was preferable to hypocrisy. She could not smile and flatter as her mother did, and then revenge this diplomacy by denunciations of the very person or persons for whom it had been exercised.

To Sheba truth was still everything ; and while she cherished this delusion she was never likely to be popular. When she could not speak out what she felt, she remained silent. This was a proceeding quite as objectionable, and drew forth many unflattering comments on her unamiable disposition, and sullen temper.

She sat alone to-night while the sound of revelry from the reception-rooms reached her from time to time.

She was not writing, though the table before her was covered with sheets of MS. paper. She felt too weary and too dispirited even for working at the trifle on which she had been engaged : a short tale for a magazine which had already accepted her occasional contributions.

Nothing is so easily discouraged as genius, for however sure it feels of its own power, it knows that power must wait for the recognition of others—that it cannot work independently, any more than an unfledged bird can reach the sky.

And Sheba was very humble. Praise and encouragement were the very breath of life to her efforts. Now she could expect neither one nor other. She thought of Franz Müller's rough and kindly teaching—of Paul's pride and praise—of Noel Hill's gentle sympathy. Alas! where were they all now? Beyond her reach—beyond her longing—beyond the cry of her passionate heart.

The hot tears fell through her clasped fingers on to the loose and scattered sheets below, blistering the words she had already written, disfiguring the smooth surface which was still a blank.

It is terrible to be alone in that mental loneliness which acts and re-acts upon itself ; which eats into the heart where it reigns, as *aquafortis* eats into the metal it touches.

There are natures to whom suffering is wholesome ; but there are others where it falls as a blight, destroying more than it can ever restore. Life had seemed very hard to this girl, sitting there in her loneliness and unhappiness. She had never possessed a home where love and confidence abounded. Going back in memory to her sad and most unyouthful youth, she saw how much she had missed in what to others seemed insignificant.

A child whose home atmosphere is one of love, confidence and sympathy is only conscious that such things are its right ; but a child who grows up unknowing them save by seeing others possess them, is painfully aware of the difference their absence can make.

Sheba knew in her own heart that she would rather go to a stranger for sympathy or advice than to her own mother ; that to speak to her of what was in her heart or nature, would only be like speaking an unintelligible language.

The memory of that cold and unloved childhood stood for ever between them, and the barrier of her love's great error was one she could never remove. Mrs. Levison was not generous enough to forget her daughter's sin, or keep silence on so acceptable a subject for reproach.

When the girl winced and shivered beneath some hint or sarcasm, she felt a glow of satisfaction in the power she wielded. When Sheba opposed her wishes, disproved the logic of her arguments, or remonstrated with her for some act of folly, she found an intense enjoyment in what she called "turning the tables," which simply meant bringing up all the girl's headstrong and unfilial conduct in the past, as groundwork for the anticipation of future ill-doing.

So Sheba had gradually ceased to say anything, and bore the burden of her mother's follies and extravagances, and her incessant fretful repining against the undeserved misfortunes of her life, with all the patience she could summon.

There was less and less hope that they could ever understand each other. It was not possible for two such antagonistic natures to do so. Sheba saw that she must resign herself to her fate, and learn that for her the name of "mother" was not the sweet and sacred thing it had proved to be to others.

It was too late now ever to hope for that.

* * * * *

The sounds of revelry from below waxed louder as the hours went on. There had been a general move to the supper-room, and the clatter of forks and spoons, the flying of champagne corks, and the loud bursts of laughter, proclaimed that the festive occasion was being improved both wisely and well.

Sheba lifted her head, and dashed the tears from her eyes with an impatient gesture.

"What is the use of crying?" she said. "Tears won't alter one's fate. I've wasted a whole evening in retrospect and done no work. That is very unwise. But I *cannot* write when I am unhappy, without my unhappiness affecting the story. I wonder if other authors are foolish enough to put themselves and their feelings into their books? I suppose not. It is a veritable 'wearing one's heart on one's sleeve,' and the 'daws' won't spare their pecks."

She was right there. Nothing is more foolish than to expect sympathy or comprehension from the world at large. It is asking for bread to receive a stone, as Sheba was yet to discover.

For this night, however, she put aside her papers, and laid her aching head on the pillow.

It was useless to try to sleep till her mother came upstairs, as her services were always required by that lady, who, having once been accustomed to a maid, found it impossible to undress, or dress, or brush out her scanty locks without assistance.

So Sheba lay there, her eyes, wide and sorrowful, following the shadows on the ceiling, which came and went as fitfully as the troubled thoughts within her own breast.

In the quiet night watches these thoughts were faithful as of old to one memory, to one love. She had schooled herself to look upon them as one looks upon a dead face—shrouded—chilled—unlike the likeness one remembers, and yet speaking of that likeness in every marble feature. But in these dark and silent hours that face took life and colour, and the sealed lids opened, and the eyes looked back at her, and tender thoughts like ministering angels from the past weaved visions of enchantment for her saddened heart. She could not deny herself this one solitary pleasure, unwise as it was. She could not say, "I will not think, for thought is dangerous."

Alas! the danger was but an incentive and a charm. It added to the consciousness of her own unfailing love—it whispered hopefully of his. The present alienation of their lives could not unlink the memory of that sweeter tie which had been at once the pride and peril of their lives.

The cruel blow which had struck at the very roots of the girl's youth had been powerless to alter her love, or chill one of its passionate memories. In all her life to come she knew that Paul's place would never be filled, or Paul's affection supplanted.

Moralists may scoff as they please, they will never be able to frame any law that will bind life to life in unbroken fidelity, as the law of a pure and exalted love can do.

It wants no compelling—it needs no restriction—it has a strength and force far exceeding the poor gossamer threads of mere legal compulsion, but it is too rare a thing for universal application, so perhaps the moralist is wiser than the lovers after all.

If Sheba had possessed any physical ailment she would have met with sympathy and been tended with care; but what could any one in that household understand of a nature proud and uncomplaining—the nature of which Fate delights to make martyrs—the nature of a lonely, saddened girl, whose heart was slowly breaking for sheer want of one word of kindness, or encouragement, or hope? What could they know of the emptiness and isolation of a life to whom material comfort meant nothing? Just as little as they could comprehend the tenderness of that shrine to which the girl's whole heart and soul had dedicated itself—the shrine behind whose mystic curtain Love sat and sorrowed, with veiled face, and hopeless though most tender faith.

CHAPTER IV.

NEMESIS.

"ARE you asleep, Sheba?" inquired Mrs. Levison's voice sharply.

The girl raised herself from the pillows. Her eyes were dull and heavy. The dark mass of her hair fell round her slight figure. She had almost forgotten where she was in that long waking dream which had steeped her in the sorrows of the past.

"Oh, no—I wasn't asleep," she said, getting out of bed and advancing to the toilet table, before which her mother had seated herself.

Sheba turned up the gas, and the light showed her pale face and wistful eyes in the glass. Mrs. Levison, catching sight of that reflection, immediately assumed an injured expression.

"What have you been crying for?" she demanded. "I'm sure you've nothing to complain of. And if you choose to mope up here, instead of enjoying yourself as you might do, well, that's your look out. You mustn't blame *me* for it."

"I don't blame you, mother," said the girl, as with deft quick hands she unloosened the satin bodice and heavy jet-trimmed

skirt of Mrs. Levison's evening dress, "and my reason for not going downstairs to these parties is because I should *not* enjoy myself—far from it. I am much happier at my work."

"Oh, your work," said Mrs. Levison pettishly. "That is such nonsense, Sheba. As if you were a charwoman, or a shop-girl. Writing is not *work*. It's only a—a sort of amusement. When I was a girl at school I began a novel, so I know something about it. It is as easy as possible. Now that I come to think of it, I daresay you inherit my talent for that sort of thing. I'm sure your poor father never had any."

"Talent needn't be inherited—of necessity," said Sheba gently, as she relieved her mother of her head-dress and began to brush out her hair. "All actors' children don't take to the stage, nor all artists' to music, nor all painters' to the brush."

"Oh, please, none of your arguments, Sheba. You always make my head ache. You're so dreadfully dogmatic, and ever since you knew that horrid old German atheist, your ideas are positively frightful. How can a child be different to its parents? It's against nature. Hex is like me, and you take after your unfortunate father, and Dolly is like *her* father. Really, that child is a perfect little Jewess," she added spitefully. "Nothing could alter her. I'm tired of trying."

Sheba was silent. She knew how worse than useless it was to attempt to reason with Mrs. Levison. It only led to bitter words and ill-feeling. The prejudice of ignorance, when combined with the obstinacy of a mind that refuses to be convinced, offers an insuperable obstacle to argument. As well hit your head against a stone wall as attempt to reason with an illogical person. It is sheer waste of time and temper.

"Why don't you talk?" resumed Mrs. Levison presently. "I hate to see you looking so solemn and glum, standing there behind me, and all that hair hanging about you—so untidy; just for all the world like one of those pictures of patent hair restorers. I wonder you don't go to one of their agents and be photographed. I know they give very large sums of money for good heads."

"And the public buy the stuff," said Sheba, "because they think the photograph is the *result* of it, instead of the so-called Restorer being the *result* of the photograph."

Mrs. Levison was rather bitter against these puffed and

advertised remedies. She had tried most of them and found them all equally useless. They neither made her hair grow "long and luxuriant" nor restored its fading hues to "youthful lustre and beauty," as they professed to do.

In their dumb and helpless fashion they simply did what humanity at large does—deluded the weak and trusting for the benefit of the bold and unscrupulous. It is this golden rule which has proved the success of most advertisements.

Sheba twisted up her heavy locks with a swift, impatient movement. Since Mrs. Levison had begun to lose her own hair, she hated to see any one else with luxuriant tresses.

"My head was aching," said the girl, "and it surely doesn't matter how I look at night, mother."

"I suppose not," said Mrs. Levison spitefully. "Not *now*; when there's only your mother to see you."

The hot, cruel colour crept up to the girl's very brow. Her lips quivered, and her hand, losing its hold of the ivory brush, went to her heart with a sudden pained gesture.

But she checked the angry rejoinder which once would have been so sharp and swift. The colour faded, leaving her face wan and cold and strangely humble.

Mrs. Levison had seen the quick flush and the gesture of pain. They were not new to her, and they were still capable of affording her some pleasure. It was no small triumph to have brought down that haughty spirit—humbled that proud heart.

The conscious self-abasement and bearing shown in the face before her, might have touched any woman with its appeal to the compassion of their common womanhood. They carried no appeal to Mrs. Levison.

"I wish you would finish brushing my hair," she said pettishly. "I am tired, and want to go to bed."

Silently Sheba obeyed, forcing down with a strong hand the torrent of feeling that surged within her breast; hiding the tears that scorched her downcast eyes, because of the pride that forbade her to show how easy it was to wound her now.

"Those parties here are really very stupid," resumed Mrs. Levison presently. "Always the same people—the same show and expenditure. I wish I had half the money Mrs. Matthew spends on her entertainments. It would make a comfortable addition to my income."

"I wish you would come with me to-morrow and see a house in St. John's Wood that I've heard of," said Sheba. "It is small, but very pretty, and has a nice garden, and the rent is moderate. I think we have been here long enough—too long, in fact. They must wish us away by this time."

"They do not wish *me* away," said Mrs. Levison. "But then I hope I know how to make myself agreeable under any circumstances. If you had my tact, Sheba, you would be a favourite with every one; but you seem to delight in being disagreeable."

She gave another glance at the white face and drooping eyelids which the mirror reflected. Their mute reproach annoyed her.

"If only you weren't such a fool," she exclaimed sharply, "you might save us both from all future worries and troubles. Benjamin Levy is over head and ears in love with you—any one can see that—and he'll have all his father's money. That means £10,000 or more a year. But of course you'd rather see me starve than make any sacrifice. You were always so selfish and headstrong."

The glance at the mirror now, showed her a picture that she long remembered, callous and cold-hearted as she was. She had not been prepared for the effect of her words—it had not been in her even dimly to imagine what sort of effect they would have on her daughter.

Sheba laid the brush down on the dressing-table, and faced her mother in a white heat of passion that no words could express with half the force and fervour of her burning thoughts. "How can you say such words? How *dare* you!" she cried. "You gave birth to a woman child. Have you no woman's feelings? Look at me—" She stopped, panting, her hand upon her breast, the tears thronging thick and fast to her eyes. "Look at me," she went on, her voice low and trembling with agitation, "and remember you yourself have called me a shame and a disgrace. But not so shamed—not so disgraced—that I would ever give myself to any living man for all the wealth and all the honours in the world. I am not to be bought, mother—even to save you inconvenience. Let there be no paltering of words between us. You have broken silence . . . then hear the truth to-night. I have loved one man—one only. All my life and faith are his. You could not understand; you could not believe

this. It isn't your fault, perhaps; your nature and mine are widely different. I can bear anything from you—reproach, coldness, indifference—but not *this*—not what you suggested a moment ago. That is a depth to which I cannot fall. If ever the thought of doing so carried any tempting with it, I would kill myself on the day that thought poisoned my truth to the past."

"Oh, don't talk like a tragedy-queen, Sheba," said her mother petulantly. "It is rank nonsense. You call an honest and suitable marriage a disgrace, and the shameful error you committed in the past, an honour. It is impossible to reason with so perverted a mind."

"I call it a disgrace for any woman to sell herself for money, or position, or safety," said the girl slowly; "the most wicked, the most shameful degradation that my mind can conceive. Because it is done every day, and because religion sanctifies it, does not alter the main fact in any degree. I make no excuse for myself. You knew all, and you took me back and gave me a home again. Do not think I am ungrateful, but you have made my bread very bitter with reproach, and now you urge on me a new shame to cover the old."

She covered her face with her hands and shuddered as if the chill damp air without had touched her even in this warm, perfumed room. "You *will* exaggerate so terribly," said Mrs. Levison in that acrimonious and complaining voice which she generally used in her arguments with Sheba. "I'm sure very few mothers would have behaved as I have done, and looked over such a blot on your life and prospects. The least you can do is to second my endeavours, not oppose them. Very few girls ever get the chance of covering such a mistake as yours. No one here would know, and there you would be—comfortably settled for life and all my anxieties set at rest; but no—you are as obstinate as when you were a child."

The hands dropped then from the white face.

"A child," echoed the girl, "was I ever that? . . . Does it mean those empty, uncomprehended, lonely years that stand out as my only memory? A child? . . . starved of love and with no outlet for her feelings! Is it any wonder, mother, that temptation came to such a child as it might never have had power to come to—you?"

"Your reproaches are only another proof of your ingratitude," cried Mrs. Levison, whimpering. "I did my duty, and no one can do more. You were brought up on the strictest Christian principles—my conscience is clear on that score. If you listened to atheists and infidels that is your own look out. It is disgraceful to think you won't go to church, and actually argue about the infallibility of the Bible as if it were some ordinary book! No wonder you went wrong. When once we leave the path of virtue and neglect the precepts of our parents, we become an easy prey to temptation, and fall into error."

Mrs. Levison repeated this copy-book platitude with an air of perfect satisfaction.

Sheba turned away. "We will not argue about religion," she said. "If my bringing up was so admirable, and the fact of going to church three times a day was a talisman for spiritual welfare, how comes it that they failed to produce their natural effects upon me?"

Mrs. Levison was silent for a moment, being occupied in bathing her face with a complexion wash. When that operation was concluded she sat down with a severe-looking book whose contents she always studied for five minutes every night before going to bed.

After dipping into these meditations she found herself sufficiently refreshed to resume the discussion, but as Sheba lay silent with her head buried in the pillow, she concluded she had fallen asleep and followed her example.

But the girl was not asleep. That was a blessing she seldom experienced. Those nightly toilet operations were opportunities that Mrs. Levison was loth to neglect. It was one thing to have assured Sheba of her forgiveness of her past error; it was quite another to cease upbraiding her for that error. She had told Noel Hill that she was perfectly aware of her duty as a mother and a Christian, but the feeling within her had been stronger than her Christianity. It came easier to rebuke than to pardon. Consequently she rebuked. And no time for the judicious administration of such a Christian duty was so opportune as that quiet half-hour before retiring to rest—a half-hour when rebukes and toilet duties were characteristically sandwiched in between the "Meditations on a Future Life," which admirable volume always closed her day's arduous labours with its soothing counsels.

But she had never expected such a storm as her words to-night had raised, and when she looked out from the padded comfort of her own couch to that small uncurtained bed where her daughter lay so strangely quiet, something that was almost remorse touched her for the first time. Had she been too severe, had she touched that unhealed wound too roughly? Fortunately a belief in her own excellence of motive here came to the rescue and preserved her from the uncomfortable shock of self-condemnation. It had been all done for the best, and if Sheba had suffered she deserved her suffering.

Comforting herself with this reflection she shook off the memory of that pale stormy face, and the bitter words that had pierced through the plate-armour of her own self-esteem.

On that other bed where the quiet figure lay so strangely quiet, what wild thoughts ran their passionate race with the self-restraint that the tortured heart was slowly, surely learning?

Strange mystery of nature, that a life responsible for another life should be at once so uncomprehending and so cold! Strange that the voiceless silence itself should hold deeper sympathy with that lonely heart, than the living form beyond.

The wild, odd, unchildish child whom she had never loved and never understood, was only to this mother what she had always been, a trial, a vexation, a mystery.

Nature can make mothers out of any feminine thing it chooses. It needs something higher than nature to breathe into that tie the sacredness, and comprehension, and patient love which alone elevates it beyond the instinct of the animal, and the tolerance of the ignorant.

CHAPTER V.

"EGYPTIAN BONDAGE."

TWO weeks had passed since Sheba's visit to the great Mixson, when she one morning received a letter from that eminent firm requesting a call from her at earliest convenience.

Eager and hopeful that this meant good news of her book, the girl lost no time in proceeding to the office. Had she been older and wiser and better acquainted with the ways of publishers she would not have shown such haste, but kept at a dignified distance and requested to be informed of the reason of such a request.

As the great Mixson always kept his contracts ready at a moment's notice it not unfrequently happened that the author left the premises bound hand and foot to the publisher for a term of years, and with his mind full of the brilliant prognostications as to fame and fortune that poured forth in a bountiful and mellifluous stream from the great Mixson's ever ready tongue. He possessed that delightful faculty (whose only drawback is its uselessness) of transforming fancies into facts, and probability into certainty by the mere alchemy of words. But then what words they were! Especially when addressed to the weaker sex. The flattery—personal or implied—the gentle stimulating encouragement, the golden hopes, the magnificent possibilities. It was enough to make any one who heard him dash madly into literature at once, and liberally reward this great promoter of the art for such encouragement. This enthusiasm did not generally last more than a year or two.

Then he would remonstrate with the great Mixson, which was useless, or threaten him, which was dangerous, as the great man had a firm of scrupulously watchful solicitors at his beck and call who fought his battles manfully, and nearly always with success.

On the day that Sheba presented herself for the second time, the great man was in a particularly genial frame of mind, engendered by the successful issue of one of these audacious attempts to wrong him. He had won the case and had been awarded substantial damages for the slur cast on his integrity. He was therefore in the sweetest and most amiable disposition. Sheba found him as before in his official chair ; the "staff" around and about him industriously occupied over ledgers, and agreements, and other matters connected with the important business of publishing. His voice reached the girl as she came up the stairs, and her heart began to beat a little anxiously.

However, when she appeared before his desk, the great Mixson welcomed her with surprising cordiality.

"Ah! You do not let the grass grow under your feet, Miss Ormatroyd. So much the better. I like to see ladies prompt in business matters. Come round here. Jones! A chair for Miss Ormatroyd, and you can leave that copying and go into the clerks' room till I ring."

Sheba advanced and took the chair. She was visibly nervous and Mixson saw it.

"Now let me see. What did we write to you about? Oh, your novel. Yes, the report came in yesterday. Here it is." He dived through a heap of papers and letters on the desk and produced one which he slowly unfolded. "The reader seems to think there's good stuff in it," he went on. "But of course it's crude and—well, has the faults of most beginners. Still, it may be worth while to bring it out if we can come to terms."

The flush and radiance of the girl's face at that moment came under his notice, and his gallantry prompted him to compliment her on them before proceeding into further details. After wasting a few moments in this somewhat unbusiness-like fashion, he resumed the subject of terms.

"You see, my dear young lady, a book is always more or less of a risk to a publisher. It may be excellent, and the public will not look at it. On the other hand, it may be rubbish, and sell by the thousand. Now, I candidly tell you it's rare—very rare indeed—for us to treat with an author as I'm going to treat with you. But I have taken a great interest in you, so we'll sink the business side of the question for a moment, and talk as friends over it."

"I—I am sure you mean to be kind," said Sheba, flushing hotly. "But, really, I should much prefer treating the matter on a purely business footing. It would be more satisfactory."

The great man only laughed and continued in the same tone.

"Phoo, phoo! my dear girl, don't you be foolish. When Pat Mixson says he'll be your friend, do you know what it means? No; of course you don't. Well, it means success—it means fame—it means fortune rolling in golden streams to those little feet. It means a glittering pinnacle of eminence, on which you will stand triumphant and confident—the world at your command. It means a day when you will proudly point to me as the founder of those fortunes, and reading our joint names on every work as architect and builder of this temple of fame, you will grasp my hand and say, 'I bless the day when fate sent me such a friend as —Pat Mixson.'"

Long practice lent him the force and eloquence necessary for this grandiloquent harangue, while the recipient of his glowing predictions sat pale and astonished before him. "If—if you would explain a little more clearly," she suggested.

The eagle descended from his eyrie and became at once a

meek and cooing dove. "Explain, my dear Miss Ormatroyd? Explain that I mean to make you the costliest jewel in my whole crown of successes—that I am willing to pave the thorny path to fame with a velvet carpet for those dainty feet—that, in short, I am willing and ready to enter into an arrangement with you about your books in the future as well as the present—so certain I am that you have it in you to become great and famous. I have a keen eye for genius, my dear young lady. Where should I be now if I hadn't?"

Sheba still looked questioningly at the great man—wondering whether he ever meant to come to the point. Mixson was quite aware he was trying her patience. It was a salutary proceeding, however, and one which, in course of years, had become a habit whose beneficial effects he had not infrequently proved on the person of a perplexed and wearied author.

Shorn of the dazzling oratory of the great Mixson, and viewed apart from, and far below, that pinnacle of fame on which he predicted she was eventually to stand, the arrangement respecting her book was as follows :

Mixson and Co. would publish it *at their own risk and expense*, and would generously allow the author one-third of the profits arising from its sale on two conditions. The first : that the said author should expect no such share until the publisher had recouped himself for the expense of producing the book, and that book had reached a sale hereafter to be decided, but certainly not less than 500 copies of three volumes. The second : that the said author should agree to bind herself for a term of years to write exclusively for Mixson and Co., receiving for each book of regulation three volume length, a sum of fifty pounds down, and a future royalty of five per cent. on any cheap edition of such books.

This was all so much Greek to Sheba, but hampered by the exaggerated flow of words which the great Mixson offered as explanation, and which conveyed that a third share of the profits meant a very large figure ; that £50 down on publication was always certain, and that the future cheap editions of her books was a perfect mine of wealth, into which her ambitious spade might dig for ever and always turn up treasures, she began to yield.

The first symptom of success was hailed with alacrity by the great Mixson, who forthwith proceeded to finish the business.

"No time like the present, Miss Ormatroyd," he said. "Let us sign, seal and deliver, and the whole business is concluded. It will save you the trouble of another journey. The principals are here; the witnesses on the spot. Jones, bring me an agreement and a stamp."

Sheba was somewhat taken aback. She would have liked to consider the matter again, and timidly suggested that it might be advisable to consult her friends before committing herself to the legal obligations of a contract.

But the great Mixson was ready at his guns. "Friends," he exclaimed, "what do they know about publishing? My dear child, I'm your best friend, and I'm making a special favour of this matter. I know you're anxious to get your book out, and it shall be set in hand at once. Why, you can have your proofs next week, if you like."

That was a trump card. Proofs! Oh, words of golden meaning, bringing joy and delight and life into the dreary waste of penmanship through which the brain has plodded! Oh, vision of hope on which so much depends! Oh, reward of anxious days and sleepless nights, how you spring up in the desert of despair beneath the sun of promise those words unveil! Proofs! Sheba turned white and red, and said no more.

When she left that office and closed the door behind her, she had bound herself to her publishers for a term of years.

Book III.

CHAPTER I.

A VOICE FROM THE PAST.

"DOES Miss Ormatroyd live here?"

The small maid-servant who had opened the door, looked in some surprise at the visitor.

"Yes, sir—but I don't think she can see any one this evening. She's busy."

"I think she will see me," said the visitor persuasively, "if you will take in my card."

He handed her the slip of pasteboard, and stood waiting in the tiny hall till he heard the result of his application. Glancing

about with calm observant eyes, he noted the bare and poverty-stricken aspect of the interior.

The house was a very tiny house, shut off from the main road by a stone wall. It was the sort of house described as a "bijou villa" in house agents' catalogues — for no earthly reason, apparently, than because it is as unlike a "bijou" as possible.

Through the open hall door the garden was plainly visible—an untidy, neglected grass plot, a hedge of box and laurel on the inner side of the stone wall, and a gravel path, sorely in need of weeding, that stretched up to the doorway. The visitor shook his head in thoughtful disapprobation, and at the same moment the small domestic appeared, beaming upon him in most friendly fashion.

"Miss Ormatroyd will see you, sir. Will you please to step this way?"

Two doors opened into the narrow little hall, which then extended itself into a region of darkness leading to the kitchen and (to use once more the house agents' description) "usual offices."

At the furthest of these doors the little maid stopped and knocked; then desiring the gentleman to "step in," she disappeared into the obscure retreat which was sacred to her own duties.

It was a very tiny room into which the visitor stepped; but he had neither time nor inclination to criticize it then, for his eyes held only sight and welcome for the tall slight figure of the girl who advanced to greet him.

"Noel! . . . is it possible? How did you find me out?"

"I will tell you that if you will only say you are glad to see me, Sheba."

"Glad!" . . . the trembling hands that were clasped in his—the tears swimming in the uplifted eyes—spoke more eloquently than words. "More glad than I can say. . . . Oh, if you only knew how often I have wanted you."

"That is good to hear," he said somewhat huskily. He dropped her hands and looked about the room. It seemed as if he could not quite trust himself to look at her—yet.

She drew a chair forward and asked him to sit down.

The furniture of the room consisted only of a writing-table near the long French windows, a couple of chairs, and some book-shelves.

The windows were draped with a soft Oriental fabric, and

looked out on a fair-sized, though very untidy, garden, fenced from neighbouring eyes by the same stone wall that shut the "bijou" in from the road.

"Now," said the girl, resuming her own seat at the writing-table, which was littered over with papers, "now, Mr. Hill, for all your news! What has brought you to England, and how have you discovered me?"

"I was 'Noel' a moment ago," said the visitor; "and unless you keep to that, I shall refuse to answer any questions."

The girl blushed and laughed. "Well—Noel—if you insist—and as we are no longer master and pupil."

"No," he said thoughtfully. "It is strange how the years change now. Well, Sheba, I have returned to England because my health is quite re-established, and because my father wanted me to assist him. That is answer No. 1. To the second question—do you fancy it was difficult to trace you when you had sprung into fame as you have done? Could you imagine the thin disguise of a *nom de plume* would hide your identity from any one who had once known and studied the character of—Sheba Ormatroyd?"

She turned very pale, and a look of terror sprang into the dark pathetic eyes. "Oh! don't say that," she cried. "I hope you are wrong—I don't want any one to know who I am. I... have purposely concealed myself and my real name. Only my publisher knows that. Look here!"

She pulled open a drawer in her writing-table, and showed him a pile of letters crushed and heaped together. "These," she said, "are all invitations and requests for my acquaintance sent to the publisher's office by all sorts of people: rich—titled—artistic—clever; people I would like to know, and who seem equally anxious to know me; but I have never answered one of them. . . . I—dare not."

He looked up quickly. Their eyes met.

"I understand," he said gently.

She closed the drawer again and resumed her old attitude, her cheek resting on one slender blue-veined hand, the other toying restlessly with the pens and pencils on the table.

"I do not want to go into the world," she said. "I am afraid of it . . . of whom I might meet. It is better—wiser—safer—to remain unknown."

"Your book has been a wonderful success," said Noel Hill. "We had it in Melbourne, you know. I thought, at first, it was a pity you had taken a new name. But perhaps you were wise."

She clasped her hands and looked at him in the old impulsive, earnest fashion he so well remembered. "I did it for a purpose. I hope I succeeded. Oh, Noel, if *he* should find out I was not dead after all."

"Do you never think," he answered gently, "how he may have suffered?"

"I know it," she said brokenly. "By every pain of mine, by every longing, by every wild and passionate thought that *will* fly back to him, I know it. But it is better so. What could my life do for him, or his for me, if—if we met now?"

"But have you never thought of the risk you run? See how easily I discovered you. I simply went to your publishers, and they gave me your address."

"They had no right to do that," exclaimed Sheba, flushing hotly; "I have strictly forbidden them to do so."

"My dear," he answered smiling, "do you know so little of the world still as to believe any order will be executed in the spirit in which it is given, or that any official is beyond the temptation of a bribe?"

"You," she said, "ought not to have descended to such an unworthy proceeding."

"I know," he said coolly. "But I had come all the way from Australia to see you, and I could not let such a trifling impediment stand in my way. I said I was an old friend, and that I *must* have your address. So it was given to me."

She shook her head reproachfully. "It would be ungrateful to say I am sorry. Oh, Noel"—and the tears rose again, and the stern look of the young face broke up into that mixture of pathos and longing which he so well remembered—"oh, if you knew how I have longed for you sometimes—for your advice, your sympathy, your help! I have been alone so long."

"I think," he said, as he laid his hand upon her own with the old, kindly, soothing touch, "you have been alone too long. It has not been easy for you, Sheba?"

"No," she said sadly. "It has been often very hard. I have wondered how much more I could bear."

"Will you tell me all?" he said. "You know you can trust me."

She steadied her voice with an effort, and began her story. In a few brief words she heard of that first year of struggle, carried on amidst the distasteful surroundings of Maida Vale. Then of her agreement with Mixson and Co., followed by the taking of this house, to which her mother had at last consented. "I manage to make a good deal by writing for the magazines and newspapers," she said in conclusion. "I am bound to give my books only to Mixson and Co., so, though I have had many better offers than theirs for my next novel, I cannot accept them."

"But why did you bind yourself in that fashion?" asked Noel Hill.

"I had no choice," said the girl simply. "They would not agree to take '*A Dream and its Ending*' unless I signed a contract for five years. It sounded rather plausible—and I was tired of waiting and wanted the book out," she added naively. "The Levys and all their friends would not believe I could do anything. They were rather astonished when the book was published, and the reviews came out, and it was in the second edition within two months. Then a third followed at 6s., which went very quickly, and the cheap edition is just ready. So I suppose it has been a sort of success."

"It was an admirable book," said Noel Hill; "though it had a very mawkish title, I thought. I suppose," he added, "you made a good deal out of it?"

"Oh, no," said Sheba colouring; "the agreement only allows me a third of the profits after all the expenses are paid. When I read the statement I was astonished to find how heavy those expenses were. The paper alone for the two editions came to over £100. Then there was printing, proof corrections, binding and advertising. It costs a great deal to bring out a book, and Mr. Mixson says it is always more or less of a risk."

"Who are these people?" asked Noel Hill. "Are you quite sure they're giving you the best terms?"

"How can I tell?" said Sheba. "They've a great name, and Mr. Mixson is enormously wealthy. He knows how to drive a hard bargain, though," she added with a sigh.

"You ought to have had some one to manage this for you," said Noel Hill. "An inexperienced girl like you knows

nothing of business. And as for tying you down for years at the ridiculous rate of payment offered for your first book, why, it's most absurd."

"But you see they could not tell it would be a success," said Sheba. "Supposing it had turned out the other way, they would have had the worst of the bargain."

By which innocent admission it will be seen that the Mixsonian doctrines had been sown in very fruitful soil. The great man had never come across such an inexperienced author as this girl whom all the world of literature praised, and envied, and wondered about. But Noel Hill, though not especially worldly-wise, felt somewhat indignant at the proceedings of the firm in question, and privately resolved to inquire into the matter himself at an early opportunity. Sheba was far too dreamy and impartial to make any commercial bargain about her books, and his own knowledge of her sudden fame convinced him that the publishers were not treating her generously. He changed the subject now, however, and inquired for Mrs. Levison.

"If you will stay and have some tea presently, you can see mother," said Sheba. "She always lies down every afternoon till five o'clock. She doesn't like this house," she went on rather gloomily. "You see the Levys, where we were staying, had a beautiful place and lived in a very expensive style. Naturally mother misses it. She goes there a great deal still to see Dolly."

"And you?"

"Oh, I don't like them, or their ways," said Sheba frankly. "They are such an odd mixture of meanness and prodigality. It was awful. One heard of nothing but money, money, money! They talked money, smiled money, ate and drank money, *dreamt* money. I was so thankful to get away. This little box is at least quiet, and one can do what one likes. This is my own den," she added, "where I work and read, and retire when I'm in an unamiable fit. Even mother has learnt the wisdom of leaving me alone when I close this door."

He smiled. "You are not much changed," he said. "You are still the outspoken, honest-souled Sheba, I remember in the old days at West Shore."

"Oh, I have changed very much," said the girl sadly. "It was not possible to help it. How long ago it all seems, Noel. How long, long ago!"

"If one 'counts time by heart-throbs,' yes," answered Noel Hill. "But it is only a few years, Sheba. I wonder you haven't asked after the Saxtons yet. I saw Aunt Allison before I left. She sent many messages to you. She complains that you don't write often enough."

"Dear Aunt Allison. No, I've not been a good correspondent. I seem always to have a pen in my hand, and when I lay it down I'm too tired for letter-writing."

"You mustn't work too hard," he said, looking somewhat anxiously at the girl's face, and noting how thin and pale it was since the flush of excitement had died out.

Half smiling she held out her hand. "If you only knew," she said, "how good it is to feel there is some one to care how one looks, or what one does."

"Poor child," he said pityingly; and then again with a gentler and more tender compassion, "Poor child."

"You were always so good to me, so much more patient than I deserved. If . . . if I have conquered any of the old faults—the pride, the temper, the intolerance of others—I owe it all to you. There has been no time when I have been most sorely tried that some wise counsel or some gentle word of yours has not come home to me, and in accepting them I felt I was the wiser and the better. You say I am not changed. Oh, Noel, if I could show you my heart I think you would see and marvel at the wide, wide difference between the girl you knew, and the woman you met to-day."

He saw her head droop, the beautiful, proudly-borne head that once had seemed to challenge all the world in its supreme defiance. How he loved every hair of it. How that shamed and saddened humility touched him, as it spoke of the change he all too plainly read.

His eyes grew dim in spite of himself, but she did not notice any change in the quiet face that for her had always held a friend's gentle patience. The dusk had fallen without, and the little room was full of shadows as both those troubled hearts were full of memories.

There are yielding moments in the lives of men when even their most cherished secret clamours stormily at long-closed portals. Just such a moment was this to Noel Hill, when all his heart and soul seemed to go out to this desolate girl; when the

longing to hide that dear head on his breast, and soothe with every tender word that love could teach, that tried and sorrowful life, was a longing he could scarce stifle, as he looked at her.

"What are you thinking about ; your face is so grave ?" asked Sheba suddenly.

He started. The spell was broken. The secret so nearly betrayed was locked back once again into its dreary prison-house.

"I was only thinking," he said, "of a boy's fancy I had years ago. The fancy that if ever I made a pet of any dumb creature for the sake of companionship, it would be some fluttering, storm-beaten bird, whose torn plumage I could smooth back into beauty ; whose tired wings could fold themselves to rest within my arms—against my heart. . . . It was only a boy's fancy," he added, as he met her wondering eyes. "I never made a pet of any such creature."

"What made you think of it to-night ?" she said very softly.

He did not answer. He only rose and went to the window, and stood there looking at the gathering dusk as it lowered shadowy and misty over the neglected garden.

(*To be continued.*)

Christina of Sweden.

AMONGST the many strange personages called upon to fill a prominent place in the world's history, Christina of Sweden is one of the most eccentric. Her advent was a bitter disappointment. Instead of the ardently-wished-for male heir, there appeared in the palace at Stockholm on December 8th, 1626, a swarthy, hairy, gruff-voiced little creature, a mislucked boy, in fact, from whom Queen Marie Eleonore turned in disgust and horror. The child was six years old when her father, Gustavus Adolphus, the blond, ideal hero of the North and intrepid champion of German Protestantism, fell on the battle-field of Lutzen, leaving his kingdom and daughter under the guardianship of a council of regency. Though very fond of the queen, he looked upon her as a nonentity, devoid of common sense, incapable of entering into his life and thoughts, and trembled at the very idea of her interference with the affairs of the state or Christina's education. Like many modern husbands, he petted and caressed his wife, but never talked to her, whilst Marie Eleonore, content with her lot, adored her lord and master, and devoted her time to the preservation of her complexion.

Ignored as queen, she resolved, with that inborn love of posing and representation, inherited by her daughter, to parade before the world her widow's weeds and grief. By her orders the walls and windows of her apartment were lined and draped with black hangings, to the complete exclusion of the daylight, and there, by the dim light of wax tapers, she wept and wept for weeks, months and years, surrounded by her dwarfs and buffoons. Once a day she opened a box suspended at the foot of her bed and wept over its contents—her husband's heart, placed there by herself. Unfortunately, in the absence of the chancellor, Oxenstiern, detained for a lengthy period by the Thirty Years' War, Marie Eleonore had insisted on retaining little Christina, who, for three whole years, was compelled to share the protracted sorrow and nightmare of the black room. The prime minister,

on his return, contrived to relegate the queen to one of her castles, where the occasional records of her prolonged weeping fits saved her name from utter oblivion.

Henceforth Christina's education became a matter of public interest so keen and intense that even in our enlightened days the importance attached to her studies evokes a smile. It seemed as if the future welfare of Sweden depended entirely on the child's strides in Greek and Latin ; her progress in mathematics was discussed in parliament and the whole country rejoiced over her French exercises. Never was girl more severely trained. Instead of judiciously checking her feverish ardour for knowledge, her mentors goaded her on unceasingly, never dreaming that one so young should sometimes play with her dolls. The less childlike she was the better they were pleased. The heavy mental strain was varied by equally violent bodily exercise. Christina remained stunted, her blood was overheated, and she was more than once at death's door ; but she could speak eight languages, talked philosophy and theorised on women. Ill-kempt, dirty-handed, untidily clothed, she swore like a trooper, but rode divinely, never missed a hare, slept on a hard bed and deeply despised women, their occupations, ideas and conversation. When in her manly attire and short hair she galloped on the high road, astride on her charger, Sweden might well wonder whether, after all, she was not beholding her king. Christina's deep voice, strongly-marked features, and prominent hook nose added to her masculine appearance, but her large blue eyes shot flames, her movements, in spite of a short, slightly crooked figure, were lithe and graceful, her manner extremely fascinating when she chose. Sweden gloried in her highly-cultured sovereign, little suspecting the startling surprises reserved to her subjects.

The country was still in semi-barbarism—palaces were white-washed and princes ate their food from tin plates, whilst the lower orders lived in huts, on whose sodded roofs fed swine and sheep. Deeply religious, but rough and ignorant, the people knew only one luxury—drunkenness. How could a princess nurtured on the beauties of literature and art, impregnated with pagan antiquity and philosophy, dreaming of Southern landscapes and Italian skies, take kindly to her queenly duties in the dreary, bleak, primitive North ? Her wonderful training

was a mistake which Sweden repented at leisure and her own cost. Declared of age at eighteen, Christina, hitherto Oxenstiern's docile pupil, and imbued with purely aristocratic traditions, at once asserted her authority by selecting from the lowest class a senator in whom she had discovered great ability. "There are peasants," she boldly maintained, "who are born princes, and born kings who are peasants; and there are blackguard kings just as there are blackguard churls." The prime minister stood aghast at such rank democracy in one so excellently trained. She pretended that merit was everything, and despised birth. Was it merit that determined her choice of so many favourites, as lightly dismissed as they were eagerly installed? In spite of her masculine propensities, Chritsina was a fickle, capricious woman, who confessed that "the love of those one has ceased to care for is irksome," and acted accordingly.

With the first of these favourites, Magnus de la Gardie, a handsome, distinguished Frenchman of twenty-two, commenced what might be called the French period of Christina's reign. French artists, philosophers, savants, men of letters, charlatans, valets, stars of every magnitude, formed a brilliant court, of which she was the soul and centre. Instead of curtailing her studies for the state business, she reduced her sleep to three hours, bolted her dinner, and combed her hair only once a week. The inky school-girl had become an ink-stained queen, with dirty hands and ragged clothes, but deeply learned, eloquent, capable of arguing and reasoning. "She has seen, read, and knows everything," exclaims an admirer in 1652. And, wonder of wonders, being really learned, she was not pedantic, and hated pedantry in others! Unfortunately, foreign genius demanded more than empty honour and glory. Pensions, presents, gold chains, lavishly distributed, had to be paid for from the public treasury. Sweden resented the swarm of locusts devouring the fat of the land. Besides, Christina was twenty-five and still unwedded. Suitors of all ranks, ages and nationalities had been declined; the queen abhorred matrimony and motherhood. The senate insisted on a choice. She decided to abdicate, and only desisted on condition of remaining free. Three months later her strange career was entering a new phase. Constant overwork had seriously affected her health. She was covered with abscesses, undermined by fever, neither slept nor ate, and fainted

at all hours. Bourdelot appeared on the scene. He was the ideal ladies' doctor of the seventeenth century, insinuating, genial, witty, fertile in suggesting amusements, a good cook, deeply versed in the science of cosmetics, sang and played the guitar ; for the rest, thoroughly unscrupulous, fearing neither God nor devil, glad to live, lie and laugh. He took in Christina's case at a glance, banished every book, ordered rest and distractions, and consoled the queen by assuring her that in France learned women were considered ridiculous creatures. His treatment was followed to the letter, his magic wand transformed the palace from a solemn academy into an uninterrupted scene of dissipation. Throwing wisdom and erudition to the winds, the queen spent her days in pleasure parties, her nights masquerading and ballet-dancing, and, worse still, made fun of her learned surroundings, and insisted on their joining in her frivolous diversions. One day, at Upsala, the professors having proposed to hold their customary discussions in her presence, she jumped into a carriage and drove away at full speed. Sweden deemed its sovereign out of her mind. Unfortunately, her craving for amusements proved even more expensive than her passion for illustrious satellites. To satisfy her many caprices, Bourdelot drained the country of its gold. The heavily-taxed nation broke into loud threats against the favourite; his safety in the streets was endangered by the mob ; and prudence, coupled, probably, with weariness of him, caused Christina to dismiss him in 1653, loaded with presents. Sweden breathed more freely, but a new calamity was at hand. The queen's books, furniture, and art treasures were being packed ! This time her decision was final, and in February, 1654, before her assembled senate, she renounced the crown in favour of her cousin, Gustavus Adolphus.

The consternation was great. In spite of her faults Christina remained the daughter of Sweden's glorious hero. Tears flowed freely during the abdication ceremony, and an enormous pension was readily granted. A fleet, purposely equipped, was to await her orders, but her unseemly haste to quit the country suddenly cooled her subjects' long-tried devotion. It was suggested that she should be compelled to spend her income in Sweden. The queen took fright and fled like an adventuress, having previously sent away her goods and chattels, including the crown jewels. "The only things left to her successor," says a historian, "were

two carpets and an old bed." Throneless sovereigns are common enough nowadays; in the seventeenth century they were a novelty. Here was a splendid opportunity for Christina to indulge her passion for notoriety. A queen roaming *incognito*, and in grotesque attire, from land to land, on horseback, escorted only by four gentlemen and a few valets acting as maids! What a sensation these new vagaries would create throughout Europe! Sometimes, entering a new city, she would suddenly assume her royal rank, and followed by a temporary suite picked up no one knew where, bow to the astonished inhabitants with queenly pride and grace, reply with charming ease to official deputations in their own tongue, converse with savants as her colleagues. At other times she varied the representation by a farce and pulled faces at the crowds, and, to mystify them, changed her costume in her carriage with a clown's dexterity. Her ordinary appearance during her travels was that of a rather shabby young cavalier, who pawned the Swedish jewels to the various usurers crossing his path, appeared and disappeared, always turning up where least expected, baffling pursuit until, once more transformed into a queen, she gave another comedy. In her autobiography she expresses her contempt for certain feminine proprieties, which has caused her to be harshly judged. God has always preserved her from falling, however much nature predisposed her to it. "Though on the brink of the precipice Your powerful hand has saved me," she exclaims. Her contemporaries affirm that during her prolonged sojourn in Brussels Providence must have been elsewhere employed, because undoubtedly Christina repeatedly fell down the precipice. At Innspruck she astonished the world by publicly abjuring her forefathers' faith, the faith for which Gustavus Adolphus had shed his blood. "I went over to Romanism because the pastors bored me," she writes. The pope was not duped, but such a conversion at a time when warfare between Catholics and Protestants was so fierce, was a victory which must be loudly proclaimed. Enormous sums were spent in preparing a worthy reception for the illustrious neophyte, and for six months the Roman tailors made gala costumes for the gorgeous procession. Cannons and trumpets announced Christina's arrival, all the shops were closed, and the road lined with the papal troops. Slowly the brilliant and endless *cortège* advanced towards St. Peter's, headed by the crooked little queen,

the proud heroine of the day, the observed of all observers, in gold-laced knee-breeches, riding straddle-legged on a white charger between two cardinals. Led up to the holy father she thanked him, and was gallantly assured her conversion was so momentous that these earthly festivities were far exceeded by the heavenly rejoicings. Rome became Christina's chief residence and the pope had to bear constantly in mind the great triumph she had secured for the Mother Church in order to tolerate so trying a visitor. As a safeguard he surrounded her with cardinals. She soon led them astray and induced them to join with her other favourites in their disorderly, riotous conduct. Moreover she would observe none of the outward forms of her new religion, and on the rare occasions she went to mass laughed and talked aloud in a most unseemly manner. Insatiable of honours she was constantly at loggerheads, and believed in administering justice herself. "Patience," she maintained "was the virtue of those lacking strength and courage." Pope Alexander VII. entreated, warned, chided—all in vain. At last, aware of her monetary troubles, he offered her a pension, on condition of her altering her ways. She was furious, pawned her last jewels and embarked for Marseilles. The "ambulant queen" had long been impatiently expected in France. The French people's first impression of her was favourable. "Her manner is very civil and coaxing," remarks the Duke de Guise. "She speaks eight languages and French like a born Parisian." Her odd appearance on her tall white horse, in a scarlet *just-au-corps*, with a short skirt displaying her man's boots, a large plumed hat, a stick in one hand and pistols on her saddle-bow, gathered dense crowds wherever she went. She visited Notre-Dame and as usual talked and fidgeted at mass. Her accurate knowledge of the country, its history, manners and customs, court gossip, &c., astonished every one. At Compiègne, where the court resided, she was met by Louis XIV. and the queen-mother, Anne of Austria.

"At first," relates Madame de Motteville, a lady in waiting, "the strangely attired, tanned, dishevelled princess frightened me, but after looking at her intently for awhile I found that I liked her." Christina always pleased when she chose, only her manners, like her moods, were uncertain. Her complete *sans gêne* soon shocked a court where the strictest etiquette was the order of

the day. At the theatre she talked loudly, lolled in her chair, and flung her legs over its arms. She borrowed the king's valets to attend to her, exacting the most delicate services from them, swore freely and asked impertinent questions. Witty, original, and lively, she highly amused the young king, Louis XIV., at that time deeply in love with Marie Mancini. Christina flippantly advised him to follow his own taste in marrying her, whereupon his mother, afraid of such a dangerous counsellor, dismissed the Swedish queen, who left very reluctantly, only to return a few months later, to avoid the pest which was raging in Rome. She reached Fontainebleau in October, 1657, and was requested not to advance further without special leave. Curiosity was satisfied. Christina was no longer welcome in France. In a single day the gay comedy, played so merrily in the face of all Europe, turned to a terrible tragedy, which filled the spectators with horror. Christina the reckless, the eccentric, the joyous Bohemian, becomes Christina the ferocious, the sanguinary, whose memory crime has indelibly stained.

Amongst her suite were two young Italian noblemen, the Marquis of Monaldeschi, grand equerry and yesterday's favourite, and Count Sentinelli, captain of the guards, the present minion. It appears that, prompted by jealousy, the former had written some letters ridiculing Christina's person, and imitated Sentinelli's handwriting. In November, 1657, the queen sent for Father Le Bel, a Fontainebleau priest, and handed him a sealed and unaddressed packet of letters, reserving the right to claim them from him whenever she should chose. Four days later she again sent for him, and, armed with the said letters, he was ushered into the famous Galerie des Cerfs, where he found Christina engaged in conversation with Monaldeschi, Sentinelli standing beside them, and behind, two Italian soldiers. Trembling with presentiment of coming evil, Le Bel approached the queen, who demanded the packet and, opening it, handed some letters to Monaldeschi, roughly asking whether he recognized them. He paled, tried to deny, and finally confessing, fell on his knees imploring Christina's pardon. At the same moment Sentinelli and the two soldiers drew their swords. Terrified, Monaldeschi pursued the retreating queen through the gallery, excusing himself volubly and unceasingly. For a whole hour she listened calmly, appearing neither impatient nor bored, then motioned to Father Le Bel

to prepare the victim's soul for his doom. The priest interceded on his knees for the culprit, but Christina, coldly refusing, passed into her apartment, where she began to talk and laugh quite unconcernedly.

Monaldeschi, unable to grasp his doom, was crawling about on his knees, beseeching his executioners. Deeply moved, Sentinelli left the gallery, but soon returned dejected and weeping. "Marquis," he said, "think of God and your soul; you must die." Father Le Bel returned to the charge. Christina, still calm and unmoved, regretted being unable to grant his request. The scene continued another hour. Monaldeschi would commence his confession, then stop short suddenly, overcome by anguish. Again Sentinelli besought the queen, who sneered at the "coward" for fearing death so much. "Wound him, Captain, to force him to confess," she ordered. Then Sentinelli, pushing him against the wall, dealt him the first blow. Unarmed, Monaldeschi shielded himself with his hand—three fingers fell on the floor. A revolting butchery ensued. The swords could not penetrate his coat of mail—his head, neck, face, any unprotected part was aimed at and hacked. On the doorstep the queen's chaplain appeared. A last hope. Gashed and bleeding, Monaldeschi crawled to him and sent him in quest of mercy. Just as he disappeared through the door, Sentinelli finished the victim by piercing his throat. The scene had lasted nearly three hours.

The world shuddered at such cool-blooded cruelty, but the woman who wrote, "Weak souls alone regret past faults," did not think it worth while to fret about the punishment of a guilty valet. Indeed, she always wondered at the fuss made about this peccadillo. After the drama at Fontainebleau, Mazarin wrote, advising her not to appear in Paris for fear of the mob. Her defiant answer is characteristic. "You know that a man past thirty is not afraid of a sorceress. I find it much easier to strangle people than to fear them. As to the Monaldeschi affair, I assure you that were the deed not already done, I should not retire to-night ere it had been performed; I have no reason to repent it." Christina waited three months at Fontainebleau, vainly soliciting an invitation from Cromwell, then went to the Paris carnival, where, masked and disguised, she frequented public amusements, but was treated with the utmost coolness by Anne of Austria. During an Academie *séance* held in her

presence, the allusions to her crime became so transparent that she felt it incumbent to retire with a bow and forced smile. She left Paris shortly after, and, to the pope's torment, returned to Rome.

The brilliant Christina has disappeared for ever ; the remaining thirty years of her life are but a slow and sure decline. A bad manager, she is always impecunious. Her pension is irregularly served. She coolly offers to fight and conquer Swedish Pomerania for Germany with German troops, provided she be allowed to enjoy the revenues during her lifetime ; but her proposal is not accepted. To rehabilitate her in the eyes of Christianity, the pope allows her a handsome annuity, with a competent steward for the management of her affairs. Cardinal Dece Azzolini, young, handsome, clever, astute, is received with open arms, and soon becomes the divine, incomparable angel. If the queen remains poor, at least the terrible waste and robbery in her household are stopped. Two attempts to reconquer the Swedish throne after Charles Gustavus' death prove signal failures—Christina has alienated her loyal subjects' hearts for good and all. Nothing loth she aspires to the Polish throne, vacated by John Casimir, and, strange to relate, is backed in her candidature by the pope as a pious, prudent and heroically brave pretender. It is clear his holiness wishes to get rid of her ! Greatly alarmed, the Polish Diet raises all kinds of objections. Christina has an answer ready for every one. Her sex ? She will be a king, and command the army in person. The death of Monaldeschi ? She is not prepared to justify herself to Poland about the death of an Italian. Besides, had she not given him plenty of time to prepare for the next world ? In spite of so much eloquence, Poland remains obdurate. At the age of sixty her papal pension is withdrawn, but the queen, at a loss where to settle, remains in Rome. The time for mad cavalcades and pranks has gone by. Europe has long lost its interest in an old, obese heroine with grey, shock hair and a double chin, looking shorter and more grotesque than of yore in her manly attire, and her enormous rotundity accentuated by a massive belt. Farewell to the amazon. The *savante* once more appears. Alas, even learning now savours of dotage. Is it worth while assembling monks, prelates, and men of science to debate whether "One loves only once in a lifetime—Love demands love—It renders eloquent people devoid

of eloquence—One may love without jealousy ; never without fear."

In 1681 Christina first felt the warning finger of death—she sickened with erysipelas. She understood, and, wishing to give a final representation, set about preparing a suitable shroud. A compromise between a petticoat and mantle, of white brocade with gold sprays and flowers, designed with her own hands and tried on before her court on Christmas day, proved a grand success. The curtain might safely be drawn now ; the effect promised to be good. She lingered for three months and by the faithful Azzolini's request signed an unread will which was to benefit her majesty's household. The will declared Azzolini universal legatee—her furniture and collections alone were worth several millions. She died on the 19th of April, 1689. If the dead can see she must have been satisfied with her funeral. In her beautiful costume, a crown on her head and a sceptre in her hand, she was taken to St. Dorothea in her gala carriage and laid out on a magnificent state bed. The church was draped with black, the aisle lit up with three hundred wax tapers. In the evening they carried her, state bed and all, to St. Peter's. A royal mantle of purple velvet edged with ermine had been thrown over the remains, and a *cortege* followed eclipsing in magnificence the one which accompanied Christina on her first arrival in Rome. At St. Peter's the body was put in a coffin and lowered into a vault, there to await the judgment of posterity. Three centuries have elapsed. Her brilliant eyes and merry smiles, her whimsicalities and saturnine humour, no longer plead her cause and fascinate the student of her checkered life. Christina the gay Bohemian, and all but genius, is forgotten for Christina the crooked in body and soul, devoid of moral sense—a female monstrosity who could laugh and talk while the man she once loved was being slowly butchered by her orders.

ROSA NIEDERHAUSER.

Fate Over-ruled.

By R. M. BURNAND.

IN THREE CHAPTERS.

CHAPTER I.

IN the soft August moon the half-cut corn lay like a seething silver sea, while a gentle wind stirred the still upstanding corn. The trees overhanging at the far end of the field looked grim and dark against the silvery ground. The shadows played eerie games when vapoury clouds passed over the moon. The world was still and hushed, the busy hum of life was quiet ; far away across the fields the lights of the village glittered, giving a patch of colouring to the landscape ; nature was wrapped in slumber, reposing after the heat of the day. So thought Gerald Chester as he leant against the gate leading into the field of half-cut corn ; the beauty of the evening stole into his soul and made him think of a higher and better life, after which so many fain would strive, but earthly passions flinging their veil cloy us to the earth, and prevent our rising. He was not an imaginative man, sentiment played but a small part in his nature, but lately something had come into his heart which brought softer thoughts and feelings, making him have vague longings for a different life to even that which he led, good and honest as he was.

"I wonder will she come?" thought Gerald. "If she only knew how I want her," and he took out of his pocket a note which he tried to read in the moonlight, which was no difficulty as he knew its contents by heart. Fancying he heard the click of a gate a little way up the lane, he looked round and saw her walking slowly towards him. He did not go to meet her but waited by the stile. Marjorie Assheton saw his shadow and knew who was waiting for her ; she almost felt inclined to turn back, so much did she dread the coming interview. Still, though there would be naught but pain, she could not resist the longing to be with him, to see him if only for this once again. Love is a curious anomaly ; there is such a mixture of pain even in the happiness it brings, for love sharpens sorrow and life is not life till love has played its part. Happiness is bought at a high price. Perhaps that is why we value it with such miserly affection. And yet when we think

to have it, it will elude our grasp, and all that is left is the mocking laugh of hopelessness which jeers us for our attempts. Marjorie's love was full of this hopeless pain, and with these thoughts she advanced to meet the man who would be her lover.

"Marjorie, I was afraid you were not coming in spite of your note," said Gerald, drawing her hand into his, and looking lovingly into her face noticed its whiteness in the moonlight.

"I could not come earlier, and I almost did not come at all—what was the use——"

"What was the use?" repeated Gerald. "Marjorie, what do you mean? Have you not come to give me the answer to my note?"

"The answer I could not write. Gerald, you must know what it is—I cannot be your wife." And Marjorie drew her hands away and firmly locked them together as she said these words in a low sad voice.

"Marjorie, dear love, what are you saying? You cannot be my wife? Marjorie, unsay those words, you don't mean them?" said Gerald, leaning forward in terrible eagerness trying to see and read her face, but he could gain nothing from it.

"No, Gerald, I cannot unsay them. How can I be your wife? Your mother would be gratified at your presenting Marjorie Assheton as your wife! Besides, you are bound in honour to your cousin. You cannot set that aside, and I will not be the one to bring misery into your family." What it cost Marjorie to say those words her listener could not know, her self-control was so great.

"My engagement to my cousin Edith Burke is no settled thing at all; that can be set aside in perfect honour. Neither my cousin nor I are devoted to each other; it was a match arranged for me, and I having met no woman I cared for was quite willing to do what pleased my mother. Now it is different; I can marry no one but you. I love you, and only you, Marjorie darling, and do you love me?" and Gerald drew her unresistingly in his arms. Marjorie allowed him, as it was the last time she would see him.

"Gerald, it is because I do love you that I will not ruin your life. I love you, dear. I say it now, but that does not prevent me from giving up my hopes of happiness for your sake."

"But, Marjorie, you own you love me. Why sacrifice your love? Life is not worth living without you; you have stolen into my heart, made my life what it has never been! Marjorie, think what

you are doing—spoiling two lives. Oh! you cannot do it. I will make your life so happy, my darling," and he pressed his lips to hers.

"No, Gerald, don't try me any more. It is so hard to resist you, and it would not be right. How can I in my poor position aspire to yours? Your mother, society—how would they receive Captain Assheton's daughter? Would you like to know your wife was spoken of as 'that gambler's daughter,' and as the daughter of a man who ran away with another man's wife? God forgive me for talking so of my father, since he is dead. You and your mother hold your heads high in the county; my name would help to lower them and I will not do it. Gerald, help me to do right; let me go and—forget me," said Marjorie in so low a voice as to be almost unheard, for it was hard to renounce this love, and honour had a struggle to gain the mastery, but it had succeeded.

"I do not care for what you say; you and you alone shall be my wife. As my wife your father's name would be forgotten," and the dogged determination was apparent in his words. "I will not give you up for any such romantic nonsense."

"Gerald, I must go; don't make it harder. Your mother and cousin are returning; do your duty, and I will do mine at all costs."

"You can't love me, or you wouldn't send me to another," said Gerald, bitterly. "Women always talk of duty when they don't love; perhaps duty fills their hearts just as well." Gerald knew he was wronging the woman facing him, but he could not help a bitter word; it was ungenerous, but it seemed to relieve somewhat the pain tearing at his heart. Marjorie knew it, too, and forgave him: being a true woman, she never let him guess half the pain that was hers; her heart was aching, but she would have time to suffer later on in the dark days on which she dared not think; now she must be brave for his sake as well as for her own.

"Say 'Good-bye,' Gerald," said Marjorie, holding out her hand.

"No; I will not say 'Good-bye,'" and Gerald would not notice the proffered hand, but let her pass, as he turned in his misery and looked away over the gate; while she, feeling faint from the trial gone through, stumbled blindly forward and wended her way home. Half way she turned, and, seeing the still, motionless figure by the stile, made a move forward as if to return; then, with a sense of what she was doing, she retraced

her steps and soon reached the cottage. Mrs. Assheton was in their cosy little room, sitting idly thinking, while an open book lay on her lap. Sorrow and trouble had written with strong hands on the elder woman's face ; her hair was nearly white, which added a beauty to a sweet womanly face, still there was a great likeness between mother and daughter, though Marjorie was somewhat taller, a graceful, lithe figure ; an oval face, with dark brown hair prettily growing on a low forehead ; while a pair of grey eyes revealed a soul of honesty and courage, a firm chin and mouth marking resolution, but not hardness.

Mrs. Assheton looked up as her daughter came in, but, seeing the white, tired look on her face, forebore to question her. Mother and daughter were real friends ; each knew the other thoroughly well ; a perfect sympathy existed between them—at least, as perfect as it is possible for two human souls to have, for even in the very closest union, soul cannot be laid quite bare to soul ; each has some hidden thoughts the other cannot read. The mother guessed a little of the trouble behind that face, and knew that when Marjorie wanted her love and sympathy she would come for it. Wounded hearts cannot be touched by even the most dearly-loved hand : deep wounds are not to be gazed at ; they are kept closely hidden. Marjorie felt tired and worn out, but for her mother's sake she strove to hide her real feelings. But a mother's heart is not so easily deceived ; she can see through the thickest mask.

" You have finished your book, little mother. Was it good ? " said Marjorie, bending over her.

" Well, dear, it ended sadly, and I like a tale to finish brightly," said her mother, closing the book.

" Yes ! only that would not be true to human nature ! There is so little real brightness in life that one is perhaps glad to read of it even in fiction," answered poor Marjorie, thinking of the brightness which seemed to be bidding good-bye to her young life.

" Marjorie, child ! don't talk so bitterly ! God is very good to us. He divides the happiness with sorrow to make us long for the real happiness," said Mrs. Assheton, whose lot had been hard to bear ; and though her cross had been a heavy one, her love and faith remained unshaken.

" Ah, mother, you are too good ! Why should you have been made to suffer ? You had done no wrong ! "

"Child, child, don't question the whys and wherefores! You will never get the answer. When trouble comes, which it must to all, and the world grows dark, darling, never fail! Think it is God's will, and be staunch and true to your own heart; it is only the weak-hearted ones that sink under affliction; the strong may be crushed for a moment, but they rise strengthened and invigorated. Marjorie, what a very serious little talk we have drifted into! It is time we went to bed, for I am tired, and so must you be. Good-night, darling!"

"Good-night, dear little mother!" and Marjorie kissed her mother with even more warmth than usual.

Marjorie went to her room, but it was long before she could go to rest. She sat by the window, going over and over in her mind the scene she had gone through. Had she done right? Was it wrong of her to thrust such a love out of her life? Had she not said herself that happiness was not so common that it should be so recklessly thrown away when within one's grasp? The old fight between right and wrong, desire and duty, were waging war in her soul. One moment the longing for Gerald and his love made her hesitate, and taking a pen and paper begin a letter, but she got no further than his name. Remembering herself, she threw down the pen, and, falling on her knees by the bedside, burst into tears. Poor Marjorie felt the bitterness of her trouble. Through her father her life was to be made unhappy. How could she give herself and her blotted name to any family who boasted no stain on their descent? She thought of the proud Mrs. Chester, who ruled her son and Nether Court with a firm hand. Gerald must marry according to his position. How well Marjorie remembered at the children's *fête*, when the vicar had introduced her, Mrs. Chester calmly bowed, but took no further notice; while Edith Burke, looking as beautiful as a dream in some lovely soft gown, looked at her homely cotton with disapproving eyes. Still, they both took care that Gerald was kept in their attendance, as he showed a decided preference for assisting the homely cotton. The next time Marjorie met Mrs. Chester, that lady forgot she knew her; the cut direct made poor Marjorie feel humiliated and sore. Marjorie and her mother were but recent comers in that part. They had taken a quiet cottage to suit their modest income, to which Marjorie added by painting; so they led a retired life, unnoticed

by the greater world around. Since her husband's disappearance, Mrs. Assheton had never cared to face the cruel, unsympathetic world, and though she sometimes felt she might be debarring her daughter from many pleasures belonging to youth, still she knew that the pitying scorn felt for a gambler's daughter would be harder to bear, and she shrank from exposing her child to pain—it would come without that, fast enough. Their acquaintance with Gerald Chester happened soon after their arrival. He saved them from a drunken tramp who had frightened Mrs. Assheton very considerably. The acquaintance ripened into friendship, and Mrs. Assheton grew to like this genial, honest young fellow very much, and it gradually dawned upon her that he was beginning to care for Marjorie with a liking more than friendly. At first she felt glad, but learning his position and the character of his mother, she began to fear that perhaps she was doing an unwise thing in countenancing his visits. Then came the children's *fête*, and with it Edith Burke's appearance. Marjorie heard the gossip of Nether Court: how these two were destined to be made one, that the wooing was long, and evidently they were in no hurry to take upon themselves the duties of matrimony. Mrs. Assheton debated whether she ought not to tell the young man to make his visits less frequent; but, when she spoke to Marjorie on the subject, she, in her decided way, said there was no reason to do so, if the young fellow liked their company why should they turn him away? His mother might not care to visit so humble a place as Jasmine Cottage—her son was evidently not so proud. Nothing further was said, but Mrs. Assheton watched Marjorie with loving care, fearing that in spite of what she said this friendship might end unhappily, for she guessed how hopeless matters would be with a woman like Mrs. Chester. It was a comparative relief when Gerald came to say good-bye for a short time. He had to go to London to join his mother. Marjorie saw him go with a feeling of the dulness his absence would cause, but she never remarked on it to her mother. Outwardly she was as cheerful as ever, and even worked harder at her painting. When Gerald returned the visits went on as usual, but he also contrived to meet Marjorie in her walks, and every day their meetings grew sweeter to both, and Marjorie trod the flowery path with reckless pleasure. Nothing had been said on his side to make her think he cared

for her more than as a friend—or rather she tried to think so, wilfully blinding herself to the day that must come, which would end this precious intercourse. At last it came ; Gerald wrote, since he had not seen her for two or three days, and the answer was the one she gave him in the moonlight. Poor Marjorie! The darkness of night had fallen, eclipsing the bright happy sunshine of her day.

CHAPTER II.

"GERALD, Edith comes to-morrow by the afternoon train," remarked Mrs. Chester to her son, as they sat in the drawing-room on the evening of the day after Gerald had last seen Marjorie.

"Very well, mother, I will meet her," said Gerald, lazily looking up from his lounging chair, fancying he detected a certain turn in his mother's voice which meant lectures.

"While she is here I really think we might give our garden party ; Edith is such a help to an entertainment. I think that girl is even handsomer than ever this year, and then she is so very distinguished looking," said Mrs. Chester, giving a covert look at her son whose face at that moment was rather moody.

"Yes, she is very distinguished looking," answered Gerald, while his thoughts turned to a face with grey eyes, whose every feature was dearer to him than the loveliest woman could ever be.

"She will make a charming wife, a wife to be proud of ; and I shall be glad, Gerald, when you begin to think a little more seriously of this. I want to see you married, dear, to a girl who has everything that man can desire—birth, wealth, and good looks —what more can you wish for ?"

"Nothing, mother, except that I don't care for her in the way that a man should for his wife. She is my cousin, I like and admire her very much ; had I been really in love with her I should have thought seriously about her long ago."

"In love ! My dear boy, don't talk a lot of romantic rubbish that is all very well at eighteen, but not at twenty-eight. Your father and I respected each other ; people in our position ought to consider and marry accordingly. Young men fancy themselves in love with a pretty face, and then are caught by a set of intriguing girls who are not fit to sit at the head of a table. I have no patience with romance, it leads to no good. Now, Gerald, dear Edith is coming ; won't you have matters settled by

the end of her visit? You could be married in the autumn, and go South for the honeymoon."

"What a hurry you are in, mother. Why, I should lose the hunting."

"Hunting! that is all you men think of. Hunting won't settle you in life."

"No, mother, but it might settle me, by breaking my neck," said Gerald, quietly amused at his mother's way of arranging matters for his well-being.

"Don't be so frivolous, Gerald. I do dislike flippancy; it is the tone of the day; fastness and flippancy, nothing taken seriously. Gerald, can't you promise me that Edith leaves here as your affianced wife?" Mrs. Chester was not a demonstrative woman, but she loved her son dearly, and after him her niece; her one great desire was to see them husband and wife.

"Mother, I can't promise; don't ask me;" and Gerald got up and went to the open window. How could he promise such a thing when his heart was full of Marjorie; no other could take her place. He would like to have pleased his mother, but in this he did not see his way; he did not know quite what to do. It was useless to thwart his mother, and still more useless to make any appeal about Marjorie, especially just then. Silence was perhaps the best wisdom.

"Don't stay over there contemplating the garden; make yourself sociable. I suppose you are longing for the smoking-room. Well, spend this evening with me, and as a great favour I might allow a cigarette. I don't think it will make the curtains smell," she added half to herself. But Gerald, knowing his mother's dislike to a fragrant weed, did not avail himself of her permission. And she, seeing that enough had been said about Edith, let that subject drop, hoping much from the girl's presence. Propinquity does a lot, especially in such matters. "Do you know if the Carletons have returned yet? I saw the announcement of the eldest girl's engagement; she is marrying that Mr. Howard, a very rich man. How glad they must be, with those six rather plain daughters. Lady Carleton is a clever woman, a very clever woman. That was the girl who wanted to marry a penniless captain, but Mr. Howard made his appearance in time, and Lady Carleton never lets a chance go by."

"But Howard is nothing! Look at his father! How can a

refined girl marry a man like that? Perhaps she cares for the penniless chap; if so, I pity her."

"Pity her! Really, my dear Gerald, you are positively growing sentimental," said Mrs. Chester, looking at him with almost curiosity through her long glasses; she never cultivated sentiment, why was her son so different? "It was her duty, and like a wise girl she recognized it."

"I've no doubt it was properly put before her," said Gerald grimly, thinking of Lady Carleton's hard visage. Duty would certainly be expected from daughters with a mother like that. Still perhaps six undowered daughters require a certain amount of hardness to make them see the right path, especially when sentiment walks hand in hand with poverty. "Well, I hope she will be happy."

"I have no doubt she will. If you will ring, Gerald, I will go to bed; I am tired after my journey. To-morrow we shall have Edith to enliven us. Good-night, Gerald."

"Good-night, mother," answered Gerald, giving her a light kiss on her forehead. Never, even as a boy had he given her a much warmer embrace; he had learnt that she was not a woman to be disarranged by demonstrations of affection. Often he had longed for the petting of a motherly hand. He knew his mother loved him, but, being of a warm nature himself, he liked proofs of it, and it seemed to him but a very scanty love he received. Perhaps it was this lack of warmth that had made him grow up with a kind of fear of his mother, and it was in this way that he had allowed himself to drift in the matter concerning his cousin. It was careless, for he had allowed a kind of understanding to go on; he had not cared for any one else, and sometimes he thought that a comfortable liking, such as he entertained for Edith, was sufficient for husband and wife. But now he knew otherwise, and he felt if he married any one but the woman he loved, life with its longings would be a veritable hell on earth. He could not imagine his days without Marjorie. He was certain she would yield in time; not that her "no" meant "yes," for he knew her to be resolute, but he felt somehow that if he were to place an insurmountable barrier, the time would come when, if he had only waited, it would have been all right. He thought of the words "too late;" the bitter sadness of those words. No, he would fight and win his love, for he knew those eyes could tell no untruth, and they revealed she loved him.

How harsh he had been that night! Was it only last night? How much longer ago it seemed! What a lovable darling she was; she must give in! His mother would soon grow fond of her, he thought, with all the fatuous pride of a lover in the perfections of his love. Gerald tried to comfort himself with these thoughts, and that night he dreamed Marjorie was his in spite of all opposition.

* * * * *

"Who is that?" inquired Edith Burke of her cousin, as he lifted his hat to a girl they passed while driving.

"That is Miss Assheton," said Gerald, in a quiet tone, inwardly wishing he could jump out and run after her, for it was a very pale-faced Marjorie he saw.

"She is decidedly a pretty girl; but I have seen her before. Of course, now I remember it was at the children's *fête*, and you were busily employed in assisting her. My aunt does not know her, does she?" inquired Edith, stealing a look at her cousin, who was evidently too deep in thought to pay any attention to what she was saying. "Gerald, are you dreaming? do come from the clouds, and satisfy my curiosity about that girl."

"I am not in the clouds, Edie; that girl is a Miss Assheton, I told you, and lives in a small cottage, with her mother," said Gerald, flicking flies off the mare.

"Oh!" said Edith quietly, making up her mind that this Miss Assheton and her cousin were very good friends—perhaps more. She rather resented it, as she looked upon him as her special property.

Poor Marjorie saw them drive by with mingled feelings. Her jealousy was aroused by the sight of the beautiful face beside him. How happy they must be in each other's society, and it was her hand that was placing him there, but that thought did not strike her at the time; she only felt how hard it all was. Now she learnt what she must endure when seeing them together; oh! to get away till all was over. He must love that beautiful girl; had she not often heard that men's fancies are so easily caught by a pretty face? Was he not doing the very thing she told him to do? and yet, now that she saw him doing it, with all a woman's variability she felt wounded, and longed for him to ask again. Would he plead in vain? Sometimes she thought she had done wrong, and ought to have braved all opposition for his sake; yet her very love made her more proud,

though she would not acknowledge it to herself : for she would have humbly borne any humiliation that touched herself only, but when through her the slights must affect the man she loved she could not endure it. And then, perhaps, the day might come when he should regret. How could she bear to bring one thought of regret in his life. After all, she had acted wisely for him, though it is difficult to be wise when love is at stake. Marjorie was in no enviable state of mind ; she was out of gear with herself ; she tried hard to appear the same, but her mother's loving eye noticed a change, and was secretly sad for her child. She said nothing to her, and Gerald's name was hardly ever mentioned, except by Mrs. Assheton, who always spoke of him in connection with his cousin. Marjorie, for the first time, did not open her heart to her mother ; she was afraid lest she should reveal how much she had grown to care for this pleasant young fellow ; and what could her mother do ? It was so hard for a mother that sorrow should come to the child through the father. She who had once loved the man who had been her husband could not now abuse his memory to her daughter, bad as he had been ; Marjorie was generous hearted and was sensitive in sparing pain to others. Ah, well ! it was hard, but fate was against her.

"What a beautiful girl that Miss Burke is !" said Mrs. Assheton one afternoon, after seeing Gerald and his cousin drive by. "They will make a handsome couple. I wonder when it will be definitely announced."

"I have not heard if anything is settled yet," answered Marjorie, bending over her work, wincing at her mother's words. How much happier she would be when it was all settled ! She must forget him, but, somehow, forgetting does not come at will any more than loving. You may say, "I will forget," and by force of determination one can keep thoughts at bay, till treacherous memory stealing through with recollections teaches one how small is the progress towards forgetting. Marjorie had seen nothing of Gerald for some weeks ; occasionally she met him either driving or walking with Miss Burke, but she took care to keep well out of their way. She heard of the gaieties at the Court, and her jealous heart pictured Gerald and his cousin in the centre of it all, and every day she expected to hear the announcement of the marriage.

Up at the Court things went on pleasantly, relays of visitors came and went; still Mrs. Chester was not satisfied. Gerald was constantly with his cousin, but there was nothing in his manner suggestive of a lover. Mrs. Chester could not make it out; she began to wonder if there really was any one in the background. She tried to think of all the girls of their acquaintance, but somehow she could not fix on any of them—his attentions had always been well divided. Edith's visit would be soon drawing to a close; nothing had been said since the evening before her arrival. Mrs. Chester decided to speak once more that very night.

"May I come in?" said Mrs. Chester on the same evening, going to her son's smoking-room, where she found him with his pipe and book.

"Of course, mother dear," and he got up and pushed out a comfortable chair, such as are only to be found in a man's den, for a smoking-room is generally the most comfortable room in a house.

"Your chairs are delightful, Gerald, evidently constructed, though, to court sleep," said Mrs. Chester, who was of the old school, never lounged, but sat bolt upright, no matter the chair.

"Yes, they are capital to fall asleep in after a good day with the hounds," answered Gerald laughingly, but secretly wondering at his mother's presence; it was not often she invaded his room unless to talk on business matters.

"Edith will be going away in a week," said Mrs. Chester, going straight to her subject. Then Gerald knew what was coming.

"Is she," answered Gerald, carefully knocking out the ashes of his pipe before putting it down.

"Yes, she is; and now, Gerald, have you spoken to her?"

"No, mother, I have not," said Gerald in a quiet tone. "I cannot, mother; once I thought it possible, now I see how utterly I should be wronging Edith. I care for her too much to do it."

"You say you care for her," said his mother. "What more is wanted? It is not as if I ask you to marry some one positively distasteful to you; you own she is not. I ask few things of you; can you not give me the happiness of seeing Edith your wife?"

"Mother dear, it is hard to refuse you, but I cannot do that. I only care for her as a cousin and friend; once I thought such affection enough, but I have learnt that it is not enough."

Gerald spoke in a low, hesitating way as a man will when called upon to express his feelings.

"Then, Gerald, who is it? There must be some one who has taught you," said Mrs. Assheton in rather annoyed tone. She was disappointed and baffled by his obstinacy and by the collapse of her cherished castle in the air.

"Yes, mother, there is some one who has taught me the difference between liking and loving," answered Gerald, and he determined to speak now that the way had been opened for him. Rising slowly from his chair he leant against the mantelpiece, faced his mother, and then said quietly, "The woman who has taught me is Miss Assheton."

Gerald looked at his mother to see how she received the news; for the moment she could only look at him in a dazed, puzzled way as if not understanding what she heard.

"Miss Assheton, Captain Assheton's daughter, a designing young woman who would like to cover her father's well-known name by becoming Mrs. Chester of Nether Court." The contemptuous scorn in her words was indescribable.

"Stop, mother! before you say a word against Marjorie Assheton," said Gerald, roused to heat by his mother's sneers. "She is not designing, for she refused to become my wife on the very score with which you credit her for aiming at."

"She refused you!" said Mrs. Chester in a voice of astonishment. A girl like that refuse her son, it was almost an unheard of thing. "Then there is no more to be said."

"That is not the end, mother; I tell you that Marjorie Assheton and no other will be my wife."

"And you would marry a girl who is not only a mere nobody, but bears a name which is a by-word in society; you are no true son, wilfully opposing your mother in such a matter. I have no control over your actions, but I will never receive Miss Assheton as my daughter."

"Mother, don't be so hard! Can the girl help her father's name; why should his shame touch her? How uncharitable the world is. Mother, it is for my happiness; Marjorie would consent would you but give yours."

"Then I will never give mine. Give up this mad idea, Gerald do your duty; forget a girl whom I will never receive."

"Mother, that I cannot do," said Gerald in a sad but determined tone.

"Very well, Gerald; do as you please, you have my opinion on the subject." And Mrs. Chester left the room more than annoyed at her son's obstinacy and utter disregard of her feelings and opinions. But she had gathered enough from her son to know that this girl evidently saw things in their right light; if only fate were propitious this undesired match would never take place. Unfortunately shooting had just begun, so she could not manage to get him away. Mrs. Chester was surprised in her son, she never thought he would go against her wishes, but here he was ready to thwart her in the most serious question they had had; really children develop most unexpected characters, and she thought she knew his perfectly.

His mother left Gerald in a worried frame of mind; he disliked annoying his mother, but he knew it was necessary to be determined, and her opinion, though coinciding exactly with Marjorie's, did not tend to lessen his affection, but roused in him a firm determination to delay no longer; he would ask Marjorie once again, and make her yield by the very force of his love.

CHAPTER III.

THE short September evening was fast drawing in; it was almost dark by the time Marjorie thought of starting for home. She had been at a cottage helping to nurse a poor woman's sick child, and the evening had set in before she could get away. Marjorie did not enjoy a walk across the fields in the deepening dusk, there were so many queer characters about just after the harvesting whom she decidedly did not care to meet. She started off bravely, declining the company of a little boy of eight whom his mother offered as a protector. The way she had to go must take her into the field with the stile where she and Gerald had parted. How long ago it seemed. Time in sorrow is leaden weighted, while in happiness it rushes by so gaily that we fain would put on the weights to stay its course. What was Gerald doing now? thought Marjorie. Happy in his home in the companionship of a lovely girl whom it was his duty to love; perhaps it was no longer a duty but a pleasure. Thus Marjorie tortured herself with jealous thoughts, knowing well she had no right to be jealous, and that it was more than foolish to be thinking of him. She would not accept his love from motives of honour, and now she

hated the idea of his caring for any one else. Truly human nature is queer ! The dog in the manger was a perfect insight of the selfishness of most. And yet Marjorie was unselfish ; she had sacrificed much for the supposed happiness of Gerald, but now she was suffering the cost, and it was hard to bear. She had just come to the last gate leading into the remembered field ; the gate being locked she was preparing to climb, when looking over she saw something or somebody lying half-way in the ditch. It gave her a shock, for here evidently was one of her terrors, a drunken tramp. She got over carefully, hoping not to arouse the apparently dormant figure ; a slight moan caught her ear and it sounded like a moan of pain.

"What shall I do ?" thought Marjorie, leaning back against the gate, fearful, almost afraid of treading, and listening for another moan. At that moment something bright struck her attention ; stooping, she picked up a silver flask. That certainly could not belong to a tramp, unless he had stolen it. The sight of the flask emboldened her ; she crept cautiously to the figure.

"Good Heavens ! it's Gerald !" Quickly kneeling down, she lifted his head up tenderly and rested it on her knee. "Gerald ! Gerald, my darling ! Oh, God ! is he dead ?" She felt blood trickling from a wound in the shoulder. Timidly undoing the buttons of his coat and waistcoat—and they seemed so hard to her trembling fingers—she laid her hand on his heart. Thank God ! there was a slight throbbing. What was she to do ? If she left him, he must die ; but to get him out of this, she must get assistance. In the meanwhile she reached for the flask, and managed to pour some of its contents down his throat. It seemed to revive him somewhat, as he made a slight movement. Poor Marjorie racked her brains to know what to do. She had managed to slip off her coat and put it round to keep him warmer. She could not find out the wound in the dark, but evidently his left arm was broken as well. He must have had an accident climbing the gate with his gun. Marjorie was not far from home, but she did not like to leave him there alone ; so she chafed his hands and did her best to keep warmth in him, and called him every endearing name in her agony of mind. But he still remained unconscious. At last she heard footsteps coming across the field.

"Hullo, there !" cried out Marjorie.

"Hulloa!" was the answering call, and Marjorie knew the voice. It was Stevens, the man who did their small amount of gardening and odd jobs. Coming up, a low sort of whistle formed itself on his lips when he saw his young lady with a stranger's head in her lap.

"Stevens, here is Mr. Chester. He has had an accident with his gun. I think the best thing we can do is to get him to our cottage, and then you can run for the doctor. How shall we manage it?" inquired Marjorie, looking up at Stevens, who was looking down at the wounded man as if measuring his height and weight.

"He'll be mighty heavy, miss;" and Stevens scratched his head: thought comes slowly to the bucolic mind, especially in emergency. "I know, miss, what we'll do. You wait here, and I will go an' fetch that long truck. I can get it through the cutting. I couldna' carry him; a faintin' man be a dead weight."

"That's right, Stevens; be as quick as you can;" and Marjorie sat down with her precious burden, trying by every means to rouse him. He was still in a semi-conscious state, but did not seem able to recover himself perfectly. She sat on, listening intently for the sound of the truck, caring nothing for the cold which was fast stealing over her, making her limbs feel dead in the cramped position she was in. There was a certain sense of happiness in the fact that she was the means of perhaps saving his life, and for one short half-hour she had him all to herself in her tender care. She bent down and kissed him lightly; she knew he would never know she had done it. For the time, she was oblivious to the world and all its troubles. Soon, the rumbling sound of the truck came across the field.

"Here, miss," said Stevens, bringing the truck close up; "I told the missus."

Bending down, they both managed to lift him on the truck. Marjorie had rolled up her coat and placed it under his head; and thus they set off for the cottage, which was only a short distance.

At the door they found Mrs. Assheton waiting for them. With the help of their maid, a stalwart woman, they managed to get him to the sofa. Stevens was despatched for the doctor and to the Court to let them know of the accident. The warmth and care seemed to revive Gerald somewhat, for he moaned more and opened his eyes, though there was still a vacant look in them. Marjorie dexterously cut away the sleeve of his coat, and then

they found the wound, to which his shirt was beginning to stick ; and they did their best for it. At last the welcome sound of wheels told the doctor's arrival. He ordered him to be put to bed immediately. Into Marjorie's dainty little room they carried the young man. The doctor bound him up and left directions for his care, as he feared fever. Marjorie and her mother watched him through the long, restless night. Towards morning he fell into an uneasy sleep ; still, any sleep was welcome after those long weary hours when he was restless and feverish, and in his delirium he called piteously on "Marjorie to go to him ;" she was there but he knew it not.

The news came with a great shock at the Court, and early next morning Mrs. Chester drove down to fetch him away, but it was impossible to move him on account of the fever and the broken arm. For once in her life Mrs. Chester was touched with a mother's softening love as she bent over and kissed the hot dry forehead, and she knelt down and thanked God that the accident had not deprived her of her son. As she drove back she could not help thinking how strangely fate acts. Here was her son thrown into the very society of the one woman from whom she would keep him. What would be the end ? and Mrs. Chester recalling the sad pale face that had greeted her guessed the strength of the girl's love. As soon as Gerald was well on the way to recovery Marjorie never went near him ; he missed her presence but made no remark to Mrs. Assheton ; it only made him long to be well so as to be with her. His mother was often at the cottage, and she was fast learning to like and respect the two women, to whom only a short time ago she would scarcely descend to bow. A turn in the wheel of fortune and the aspect changes. Sometimes she felt inclined to speak to Marjorie about her son, but she was slightly afraid of the girl's face and felt it would be almost an impertinence, things must be left now ; her hand could no longer hold the rudder, her son must steer his own ship.

It was Gerald's first day of real convalescence when he was allowed to come down stairs. His left arm was still in a sling, and his face was pale and thin. A cosy little tea was laid for his reception, fresh flowers made the table bright, and Mrs. Assheton's kind motherly face beamed at him from behind the teapot.

" It is good to be down once again, one gets so dead sick of one room," said Gerald, looking with contented eyes at his hostess.

" And I am glad to see you well again, Mr. Chester ; we shall

quite miss our invalid," said Mrs. Assheton, passing him a cup of tea, while Marjorie kept her eyes on the loaf she was cutting, not trusting herself to meet his, which she felt were looking her way.

"Yes! I suppose I must return to the mother to-morrow; she must be a bit lonely, as my cousin has left."

When tea was cleared away and the lamp lighted, Mrs. Assheton was called away and Marjorie and Gerald were alone together for the first time since that August night. Marjorie was working, but somehow the stitches were not as even as they ought to have been; her hands were trembling so that the needle would not go straight.

"Marjorie, put down that work and talk to me; come this side of the room."

The work was put down but Marjorie made no other movement.

"I am going to-morrow, shall you miss me?"

"Miss you? Gerald. You know I will," said Marjorie in a low tone.

"What a lot of trouble I have given you. I can never thank you and your mother enough for all your care."

"No thanks are needed; we only did what we ought."

"Yes, of course, you would do the same for any poor stranger," answered Gerald in rather a piqued tone, which made Marjorie look up with a soft look on her face which told him that the care he had received was not quite the same that would have been accorded to any stranger. "Marjorie, won't you tell me to stay this time?" said Gerald bending over, and with his disengaged hand turned her face again towards him. "Darling, look up and tell me to go! You can't!" he whispered in a triumphant tone.

"Gerald dear, don't try me too hard, it would not be right of you, now especially. Your duty——" and she hesitated.

"Duty be——" but he stopped in his forcible expression. "Marjorie, don't let pride stand in our way, you will ruin my life and yours. Dear one, come to me, for I am lonely without you;" and he drew her to him. For one moment she hesitated, the old fight strong within her; at last Pride was conquered, he had to lay down his arms before Love.

"Gerald, I will come!" she whispered back, safe in the shelter of his arms.

"My own Marjorie."

The next day, when Mrs. Chester came to fetch her son, she found that all was settled exactly as she had not arranged, but she accepted the inevitable and Marjorie was received at Nether Court.

Lady Muriel's Fad.

LADY MURIEL HEPWORTH was very rich and very kind-hearted. A disappointment in youth had not produced a sourness in middle age, as is too often the case. Her deep clear grey eyes were not brighter than her day dreams—for this indulgence was one very dear to her—and, if any one had a right to indulge in bright dreams for the future, it was surely this estimable lady whose benevolence had saved many an old couple from the workhouse, and many a small farmer and tradesman from ruin, not to mention boys and girls whom she had provided with outfits and sent into good situations.

With all her good sense, however, Lady Muriel had a "fad." This was for educating and supporting orphans. This, properly done, the subjects judiciously chosen, would have been not only a boon but a blessing to many. As, however, her ladyship did not select judiciously the result was what it usually is when charity is bestowed indiscriminately.

In the same orphanage might be found at any time a dozen girls or so provided for by Lady Muriel, while boys, who could at an earlier period of their existence earn their own livelihood, were not so abundant in the institution supported by her ladyship for that sex.

Now it often happens that whatever form of expenditure a person's income takes is praised to that person's friends. A man who makes a good percentage for his money in railways will urge his friends to invest as he has done. Another holds forth on the benefits to mankind in general, and himself in particular, which accrue from co-operative stores, while a third declares that house property in thriving towns yields the best interest for any outlay.

So it chanced that Lady Muriel spoke warmly to her acquaintances on the subject of orphanages. She went so far as to say that *no* outlay in the vineyard of the world yielded fruit of the same quality and quantity as they did.

Now it chanced that a gentleman whom she accounted as one of her dearest friends differed in opinion and ventured to say so. "If," he said, "one half the money spent in supporting orphanages were given to the surviving parent—where there is one, and I trust that children who have lost *both* parents are in the minority—or in the event of there not being a parent to the next nearest relative of the child, to assist in bringing up the child in the state of life it was born in, more and better results would be forthcoming."

"But, my dear sir," replied the lady, warming with her subject, "think how much better an example these children have than they could possibly have if with relatives."

"In what way, may I ask?"

"They are reminded of Christian duties. The matron, and, indeed, all those with whom they come in contact are good people, people who sacrifice a good position for their sakes."

"Granting this to be so, are they the *only* people in the world who set a good example? Will not a mother's words, for example, go further with an affectionate child than the words of a stranger, no matter how disinterested?"

"But so many mothers are incapable of teaching their children. They themselves are so ignorant of what ought to be taught."

"I fear that *some* are, indeed, as you describe them, but I trust that in this enlightened age they are very few. However, if they are as unfit to have the care of their offspring as you think, they will surely be within reach of preachers, who would teach them their duty in the matter, and I think that their way of living is much more calculated to initiate the children in the way of providing for themselves. In a duly ordered institution they see and know positively nothing of everyday life. It is to them a keeping of rules and having everything given to them that they require. When they leave these places they know how to sweep and dust a room, if girls; if they are boys they can clean knives and boots, sweep a yard, and pitch the wickets for cricket. They come into the world as helpless as a West Indian would be in our country. Whoever takes them into a position, no matter how easy to fill, has to teach them the simplest things belonging to it. They, in fact, when well in their teens, know no more, if as much, as a child of eight brought up in a business house or cottage home."

"My dear Mr. Andrews, you bring forward a terrible accusation."

"Not at all, my dear lady; I accuse no one. I speak against the system. I consider it radically wrong. I have long wished for an opportunity of convincing you that you did not clearly see both sides of the matter."

"I cannot *yet* think things are as you say. Pray have you had any experience in this matter?"

"My sister had a girl out of one of those homes of yours and she had to beg her housekeeper a great many times to try to bear with her. The girl had to be taught everything. Nor was that all. She had such a good idea of her own accomplishments that she was too proud to be taught."

"She might have been a peculiar sort of girl. We must not take the exception for the rule, you know."

"Certainly not. By the way, how are those children getting on that you were so pleased with—four in one family?"

"They are all out of school now. The boy is quite a fine young man. He came to see me at Christmas, brought me a little present, in fact, and spoke so nicely about the way in which I had helped his mother."

"To be sure. He couldn't do less. And you, my dear lady, I'll be bound you did not let his gift go unrequited."

"I *could not* have done so. No, I made him happy before he went."

"I thought so. Pardon me again. I know your gift exceeded his by twenty times the value."

"But, my dear friend, you cannot *know* that."

"I have a shrewd suspicion that it was so. Am I not right?"

"Certainly. I cannot think how you imagined it."

"Never mind, never mind," he replied hastily; "I do not wish you to be imposed upon. I claim the privilege of an old friend, and speak plainly for your own good. I have no wish to see you give *all* you possess to these boys and girls."

"I should not do that, and yet—but no, if one cannot deny oneself for the good of others, occasionally, it would be a pity."

"Excuse the sudden change of subject, but do you ever hunt now, or even go to the meet?"

"No, I have not kept hunters this long time," smothering a sigh as she spoke, "and yet I love riding as much as ever."

"So I thought. Will you allow me to send you a mount? I should dearly like you to enjoy a run this season."

"I should be delighted. When may we arrange it?"

"Your favourite run is fixed for to-morrow."

"Then to-morrow I will go. All being well, at any rate."

Mr. Andrews chanced to know that her ladyship had parted from her best horses about the time that a very large orphanage was built and endowed. A very generous anonymous donor heading the lists, he more than suspected that the price of Lady Muriel's horses had helped to make up that large donation. Mr. Andrews was wealthy, and a widower. He had long admired his old friend, and would ere this have asked her hand in marriage, but for knowing that she—in his ideas—beggared herself for other people.

A very happy man was he the following day. By his side rode Lady Muriel, a born horsewoman, to whom he had sent a beautiful bay horse, trained to carry a lady. She held herself as gracefully as she had ever done, and won the admiration of every one, notwithstanding that younger ladies were on the field.

As her ladyship reined in her horse preparatory to taking a fence, a young man, riding a large and powerful grey horse, passed her and went over the fence as "to the manner born." Half glancing round he lifted his hat as if in apology for his rudeness, and without seeing who the lady was rode on after the hounds, which were in full cry.

The lady, however, had recognized *him*, as Mr. Andrews could not fail to see. It was the "fine young man" whom she had supported, and who, in return for a useless gift to her at Christmas, had received a bank-note for fifty pounds.

"Nice young man, Lady Muriel—a trifle rude, but what can one expect from him? Did you give him that fine grey?"

"I—I feel the justice of your rebuke. Is this what you brought me here to find out?"

"I am afraid I did bring you for that purpose. Dear Muriel," leaning towards her with outstretched hand, "I have long wished to ask you an important question. Forgive me if I confess that the thought of your numerous *protégés* has been a thorn in my side this long time."

Lady Muriel gave her hand to her friend in token of forgiveness. Next day he asked her to be his wife, declaring that he

should have done so long before had she not been so eager to give up everything for others. The dear lady had learned a lesson which would not need repeating. She told him that she had given up her hunters and the cost of keeping them on purpose to assist in building and endowing the large orphanage before mentioned, and the shock to her old-fashioned notions when finding the boy, whom with three sisters she had supported for years, enjoying the very sport she had given up, was very great.

Lady Muriel not very long after took the name of Andrews instead of Hepworth, and, though she still supports every good work, she no longer denies herself the pleasures belonging to her station to give them to others who were not born to that position, but aspired to it in the pride and vanity of an upstart heart.

LILY LEE.

Through the Golden Gates.

By ETHEL F. HEDDLE.

"Hope!
Oh, yes, I hope, and fancy that perhaps
Human forgiveness touches Heaven, and thence—
For you forgive me, you are sure of that—
Reflected, sends a light on the forgiven."

Lord Tennyson.

MISS BROWNING'S studio in the Latin Quarter, Paris, always seemed to come upon one with a surprise, which fact was accounted for by its position. One passed straight from the hurrying pedestrians in the busy Rue Bracard into the little court-yard, where, late on this March day, the almond trees were just discernible bursting into a faint green haze of leafage. After the bustle of the noisy street, visitors passed with a sensible relief through the curtained doorway, where in the pretty studio hung with tapestry and old Bohemian embroidery, the rich hues fading to a soft neutrality, Miss Browning herself stood by the door. The room was very attractive, seen dimly as it was in the fading March light, though there was no definite "scheme of colour" and the furniture was little and valueless. But then the few chairs were hidden by gorgeous bits of silk that once had been priests' vestments, odd Parisian delf stood by a few bits of priceless china on the shelves and on the oak tables ; and the Bohemian mirror, in its carved frame, reflected gay green bowls full of willow branches with their soft grey buds, and *têtes-d'anges*, golden, exquisite. And there by the easel was a great bowl of English wall-flower that seemed to send its dusky charm over all the room. Many canvases stood about finished and unfinished, here the chalk head of a model, there a Louvre copy, two or three familiar French "bits," with the inevitable poplars, straight road, and white chateau, and on the large easel Miss Browning's Salon picture at which she was looking now half-tremblingly. At the other end of the room there was a little carved gallery the stairs leading to which being covered by a curtain of yellowish-grey velvet ; here Miss Brown-

ing kept her old canvases, and what she called her "oddments," not being reduced to sleeping there, as had the studio's last occupant.

Miss Browning herself was in accordance with the odd jumble of work and leisure, beauty, and a certain level tint of age, expressed in the room. She was not young, nor exactly handsome, though there was a charm in the clever faded face under the soft grey hair—artistic, one saw, to her finger tips, for only an artist could have so draped the folds of her rusty brown velvet gown—wise and good, if those clear dark eyes spoke true.

She was still standing thus when the door opened softly, and a woman entered and stood half smiling as Miss Browning advanced with a glad welcome, "Mary! my dear Mary!"

"I wanted a walk," the visitor said, "and the bairns were all in bed. Such a funny little dot came in to-day, Miss Browning, the Sisters all said it was like the little image of *Petit St. Jean* in the chapel. Its golden hair stood out around its head like an aureole. And it would only come to me! I fancied it knew I was the only one there who had had a child—and lost it!" Miss Browning watched her guest while she sat down, and then she went up to the stove. "Mary, you forget you never told me your story, you have never spoken of your husband, and I don't ask, but I should like to hear about the little one."

"I lost her," Mary repeated in an odd strained way, and she clasped her hands in the lap of her black gown. "It was thirteen years ago, she would be a great girl now. But I always think of her as my little cooing baby; she will be my baby still, when I find her!"

She seemed to forget the other's presence then. The little light from a window above fell full on her beautiful colourless face, and on the sweet lips that seemed somehow to hide the secret of a great peace won through infinite suffering. The impress of the suffering was over the whole face, and in the look of the pathetic eyes. She undid her little black bonnet after a little and stood up. "Let me look at the picture. What is it called?"

Miss Browning moved as if she would remove the covering that half hid the canvas. Then she paused.

"Mary, I am going to be rather rude! I expect a visitor here, just now, and he is ill, ill in his mind too, people say, and if he saw a lady here he would not come in. He will not stay. Would

you mind going up into the gallery, and taking a book till he goes? He is coming to see the picture. He was a great artist in his day, but he went off suddenly. And now they say he is almost starving, for he is too weak to paint, and too proud to take help. If I did not know you are spending all the money your aunt left you on the orphanage—as it is, I would try and interest you in him, you might manage to make him take help *someday*. I can't."

Mary had moved already, and she unfastened the curtain and went up the steps. "I have more money than the Sisters will take," she said smilingly. "I'll get a book, or I daresay I could go to sleep! It's been rather a long day."

Miss Browning went back to the stove, discreetly hidden behind a screen then, and she put the kettle on. She expected her visitor immediately, but he did not come, and when she looked upstairs she saw that her guest had really fallen asleep amongst the canvases, her head with its dark brown hair falling back on the lemon-coloured wall. She went down to the studio, thinking how peaceful the face looked, and she was just meditating lighting the lamp, when the door opened noiselessly again, and a man stood on the threshold.

He was tall and very dark, with fine features that were pinched and haggard, and his loose brown velvet coat, shabby and thin, seemed to hang upon the bent shoulders. Few would have recognized in this gaunt figure, his dark eyes gleaming wildly from under his thick brows, the once famous painter Rodney, who had flashed like a meteor on the world of art for a few years, but who was as forgotten now as if he slept under six feet of English earth.

Miss Browning advanced rather hesitatingly and bade him welcome.

"So glad you have come. It is a long way from the Rue Brévue."

"You walked a long way to see me once," he said unsmilingly, "when I was sick in the hospital. But I find the streets long now; the people jostle me as if I were a ghost. I *am* a ghost, and one that ought to have been laid ere this. I've lived beyond my name and my fame and my good fortune. I flung away my white heather! And now I live in a kind of hell. And I deserve my hell."

Miss Browning lifted the yellow velveteen and her picture

stood uncovered. She did not know how to take the artist in this mood, kind though she was.

Rodney peered forward, his hand before his eyes.

"What do you call it?"

"Through the Golden Gates!"

"Of love?" and then she was startled by an odd grating laugh that seemed to echo through the room. There was a faint sound upstairs, but he was speaking, and Miss Browning listened eagerly.

"It is good—without being mawkish. You are strong for a woman! Your man is no handsome dolt, and your girl—! Well, you had better kill her before she loses that look! Better let her die like that!"

It almost seemed to Miss Browning that there was madness in his wild eyes as he flung out his hands towards the picture suddenly. "I remember an expression like that—eyes like that, only more beautiful! My wife——"

He stopped and there was a faint jarring sound upstairs, but Miss Browning had interrupted with a start of amazement.

"Mr. Rodney! your wife! I did not know——"

He had sunk back against the wall, his face turned from the light, but the wildness of his eyes seemed to chain Miss Browning where she stood.

"She is not dead," he said, "don't pity me! You Christians believe in hell, don't you, and in a righteous punishment? So do I —though I am no Christian. Shall I tell you the story? That girl there, with her happy face, and her little feet crushing the crocuses in the grass—has driven me mad, I think! *She* looked like that, on the very day I told her that art permitted no second mistress, that Reynolds had said 'marriage spoilt an artist.' Fame was dearer, I thought, than she was—dearer even than my wife who stood there in the spring sunshine, with the auriculas about her feet, and her baby in her arms! I must be great and famous, so I said I would leave her, and cut my heart in two! Nothing must come between me and art! And so I left her."

Miss Browning did not speak, and the wild voice went on with a kind of cry, "Just there—with the cold white change on her face—and the baby clasped in her arms! She did not speak, nor move—now I always see her standing like that! I used to paint her as Cassandra, and Hebe, and Joan—the Alcestis of the time.

She was very beautiful! But I never remember her in any other way. '*That look of thine will hurl my soul from Heaven!*' And I never saw her again."

"Where is she?"

"I do not know. Dead, may be—dead to me! Art failed me. Art left me with a mocking laugh—like an Indian idol to whom a man sacrifices his all, and who tramples on and over him as he lies. Year by year I saw my cunning fail me; there was a serpent coiled in every flower, hidden in every fair thing in God's earth. . . . Death is a fiend, I think! He will not come to the call. . . . Will you tell them by-and-by how the mad Rodney raved to go? That he whimpered, impotent, of his cruel mistress, art! Let her go! Let her go! It is not she I am cursed for. I am a murderer! Do you hear? Only there is no law to punish a man for the stabbing of a woman's heart!"

It was nearly dark in the studio then. The open door of the stove glimmered redly in the corner, and only a slanting ray of faint daylight fell through the window on the cruelly smiling faces in the picture.

Miss Browning looked up, her gentle eyes full of pity, her tones in strange contrast to the artist's wild voice.

"She would forgive you," she said. "There are golden gates above us. If she is there, she will be waiting for you, beckoning to you! There is no Despair in the world. Christ's religion is the religion of undying Hope."

He looked at her and laughed, not mockingly, only with the ring of latent madness.

"Fair sounding words! Do you know what your Christ would say if He saw me at the gates? '*Why left you wife and children? For My sake, according to My Word?*' And I should answer, '*Nay, Lord, for art!*' And He! He who drove the money changers from the Temple, would He not bid them whip me hence with knots of cord? For art! For art!"

And then he turned towards the door.

"It is getting dark, dark and cold. I had better be going—home. My home is cheerless, with the ghost of Mary standing there with that stricken look! Could you paint a picture, do you think, of a man who sacrificed his Paradise for a sketch? His Paradise for art! My God!"

Even Miss Browning shrank back as he cried aloud suddenly,

in agony beyond words. She shrank instinctively. Such sorrow and such remorse were beyond her ken, kindly as she was.

Then, in the gathering shadows of the dying day, a shadow seemed to tremble on the wall behind them. Slow steps crept down stairs. A shadow from amongst the shadows passed slowly across the bar of light, and a touch as from a spirit hand was laid on Rodney's arm.

"Husband!"

Miss Browning fell back. Rodney was staring wildly, his hands flung out as if he would avert a vision from his sight.

"She is not dead, the wife you left," the whispering voice said. "Not dead to you; but living, living still, and loving still! Have you come back to her at last? At last?"

"Mary? Mary?"

"Don't you know me?" she asked with a little laugh. And she had crept up, and placed both her hands on his breast. "I am older now, dear; there are grey hairs, many grey hairs, here. I am not the young wife you left in the garden. But I am Mary, all the same. Your wife! who loves you still, better than anything except her God—better than all the world! Come home, dear husband, come home! come home!"

Her head was on his breast. As he looked down on it, and felt the clinging of the arms around his neck, the madness and the misery faded from his face. A flash of reason, of dawning hope and wonderment, softened in the wildness of his look, trembled over the whole emaciated figure. Tears drowned the fever in his eyes, and fell upon Mary's hands.

"Is it real?" he asked. "Or am I dreaming?"

"Dreaming? Are these dream-kisses?" And there was such an abandonment of joy and love in her soft voice as can never be described. "You said it was dark and cheerless, but come back with me. Home is with me!"

"And Heaven!" he cried. "And Heaven!"

They had forgotten Miss Browning—they had forgotten all the world. Hand in hand they passed out of the studio into the spring night; through the twilight streets and the jostling crowds. Rain fell, but they walked on and on, unconscious of anything but the clinging touch of either hand. And at last they reached a little court-yard, where the orphans under the care of the Little Sisters of St. Sulpice were wont to play in

the sunshine, and where the English lady lived. The almond trees were greener here, the oleanders, bare still, distinct against the chapel wall, and across the pavement Mary led her husband. The little bell of the church was ringing for vespers ; from inside the sisters' voices came softly singing their "Ave Maria;" in the pale light above, the little gold cross seemed lifted in peace and protection from all earthly care, and all these things were like a cool hand laid on Rodney's fevered brain. And Mary's guiding hand never loosed his, her eyes never left his face.

But at the entrance to the little warm room, full of firelight and the scent from the golden daffodils on Mary's table, Rodney paused, his hands outstretched like a blind man.

"Mary, I am old, desolate, sick, half-mad. I have not a penny in the world. I deserted you like a villain and a coward, and there is very little life left within me. I have no time to make it up or to retrieve."

"I love you!"

She had preceded him, and she stood now with her hands outstretched, and all the light seemed to concentrate upon her face. That was her only answer to all he said.

"Come!" she whispered then ; "husband, come!"

And at the last word he put his cold and trembling hand in hers, and Mary led him across the threshold, and through the golden gates of Love into Love's land.

Fin de Siècle.

BY ALISON BUCKLER,

Author of "WHITE ROSES," "THE TREVERTON MARRIAGE," etc., etc.

I.

MABEL AUSTIN'S married aunts and her cousins, who had carried off honours at high schools and at Girton and Lady Margaret's Hall, said it was a perfect shame, a crying scandal, that she should be brought up in such a fashion. If her poor father and mother had had any prevision of the wrongs in store for their helpless orphan, they would as soon have sent her to a baby farm in Lambeth as entrusted her to her Uncle Philip's care. Indeed, it was a question whether the law should not interfere—as it interfered with similar cases of neglected culture in the slums—and make a Chancery ward of her, and Mr. Philip Austin be formally disqualified by a commission of lunacy for such a sacred charge. Why, it was cruelty—dishonesty—fraud—conspiracy!

Oh ! yes. No doubt he was kind to Mabel in his way. She had plenty to eat and drink ; her frocks, though simple as befitted her age, were not stinted as to quality or quantity. In fact, he supposed himself to have taken the greatest possible pains with her education ; but then it was as if a young filly of stainless racing pedigree had been handed over to a circus manager for training. And was it not cruel that this poor child should be sent into the world utterly unfitted to take her place amongst other girls and to cope with such problems of life as would be presented to her ? Fancy sending a regiment into action armed with bows and arrows. Philip Austin was a disgrace to his sex and to his end of the century ; a perfect Rip van Winkle, who looked upon woman as if she were made for a slave and a toy. The whole sex protested against such contemptuous treatment. The whole century cried out against him !

This was certainly unjust in a way, for Mr. Austin held the sex in no such disesteem. Quite the contrary. Not the most advanced of female platform speakers, not all the lady graduates of London University and coming-on wranglers of Cambridge

had a more lofty ideal of woman. Mr. Austin believed women to be angels, even goddesses, and could any one go farther than that in appreciation?

And he almost worshipped the fair little girl who had been left to him by his widowed soldier brother. She was exactly five years old when she came to him, and he was quick to see that she had learnt absolutely nothing. But she was a quick, bright child and capable of being made into anything. He found an excellent governess for her, who was a clever and accomplished lady, but who, thanks to pecuniary reverses that came late enough in her life to disqualify her from certificates, was educated and not crammed. She had the charge of Mabel's "English," that wide-embracing term that includes arithmetic, elocution, history, geography, grammar and a large and elastic et-cetera, not the least important item in which was needlework in all its branches. There were masters for music, languages, riding and dancing. When Mabel reached her eighteenth birthday, the governess and masters were dismissed, and the girl stood complete, alone, revealed in all her perfection like Milton's Adam, or a house when the scaffolding is taken down. Her Uncle Philip pronounced her perfect, the one woman in the whole world fit to be Gerald's wife. Her other relatives said she was provincial and a dunce.

She was a very pretty girl, very nice and quite accomplished, in that she could sing and play drawing-room pieces and sketch in water colours and read a little French, and her cousin Gerald was fond enough of her in a brotherly way; but when his father represented to him that she was now ready to become Mrs. Gerald at the earliest convenient moment, Gerald refused at once and unconditionally to entertain the idea.

"I couldn't marry Mabel," he protested. "Why, she is the same as a sister."

"She is not a sister, which makes all the difference."

"Not all of it. A first cousin is nearly as bad. I really couldn't care for her that way. She is an uncommon nice little girl, but there is an insipidity about a sister, you know—and about a first cousin too."

"A mere fancy. There is no insipidity about Mabel herself, so what matter whether a sister or the idea of a sister is insipid or not?"

"No," doubtfully, "of course Mabel is not insipid, is she? I am very fond of her. There's no hurry, is there, to have her married? I'm very young myself, you know."

"No hurry! I should rather think not. She's the very wife all the men about will jump at in these days when their choice lies between senior wranglers and cigarette smokers. But, my boy, there may be something in the novelty of the idea to you. You may not be able to realize all at once that she is not your sister but a pretty marriageable girl. I will not have a word said to her on the subject, of course; not a finger laid with careless touch upon her sweet white innocence. But you will be in her company for the next two months. If at the end of them you don't come and tell me you are engaged—well, I shall be disappointed."

So the summer went over just as so many other summers had gone. Gerald and Mabel were constantly together, but not always alone. There was plenty of room for competition, such as should have stirred Gerald's dormant passion if it existed at all, or were not too remote a possibility to be called into being.

"They come round her like flies round sugar," Mr. Austin exulted within himself as he watched her on the tennis lawns and at picnics and water parties. That none of them had withdrawn from her society by the end of the summer in wrath and misery and humiliation he attributed to Gerald's superior claim and charm keeping them off the fatal step of proposing to her. But Uncle Philip was rather blinded by his love, or he would have acknowledged that she could hardly play tennis without coming into contact with all these idle holiday-making youths. That they came in numbers certainly, alas! never singly, Mabel in her innocence and her new delight in life without lessons, did not notice and would not have cared; but her aunts, Mrs. Singleson and Mrs. Crowe, noticed.

"She is so tame, so insipid, beside the other girls," they said. "The boys all complain she has no go in her. She is pretty and amiable. I really thought young Dalyrymple was taken with her, but after a week or two he deserted to those loud American girls. Men *will* be amused. I have faint hopes of Arthur Wynne."

"Oh! he is engaged to Nelly Ashton. Did you not know? Mrs. Ashton told me yesterday."

"Just what I expected! Yet Mrs. Ashton told me she hoped

Nelly would not marry for years yet, as the Newnham people all expected she had such a splendid career before her since her brilliant successes there. Well, there is Herbert Stow."

"He has no eyes or heart for any one but Mrs. Charlie Grey. Very shocking, is it not? But she is so fascinating, they say. I call her a mere rattletrap. But, as you say, men *will* be amused, and dear little Mabel is certainly not amusing. When she has exhausted tennis and local gossip, she has not another word to say."

"She has led such a quiet life."

"But surely she can read?"

"Only what Philip allows; nothing modern. My dear, her library is quite a little collection of fossils: 'The Heir of Redclyffe,' the Waverley novels, Miss Sewell, Grace Aguilar, and such small beer."

"Well, after all, there is something in the domestic, useful girl. Mabel ought not to be out altogether of the running."

It was at that awkward season just between tennis parties and dances when Mr. Austin gave his annual dinner in honour of Gerald's birthday. It was rather unfortunate that this festivity should coincide this year with a serious money loss. A local bank had broken in which he was a large shareholder. Still the dinner must be given. It would never do if people should be able to guess how severely he had been nipped. And this birthday dinner was as regular and as confidently expected as the sunrise, and no doubt its omission would have caused as profound a shock to the world of Maydswell as the failing of the sun to keep his daily engagement would have caused to the universe. But when Mabel informed him that she must have a new frock for the occasion, he felt that this was more than could be expected of him.

"I really have not a thing to put on," she said. "My dresses are all dirty and torn and faded."

"Surely they will wash. You have white frocks enough, haven't you? How can you be better than in simple white? You don't want to compete with Lady Dering and Miss Herrick, I suppose. Girls are not expected to dress like married women, or should not be, and there are no girls coming you need be afraid of competing with."

"The Ashtons and the Wynnes," she suggested; her cousins were back in town.

"The Ashtons, blue-stockings with uncombed hair and strings untied ! The Wynnes, who have twopence a year to dress upon ! You need not fear being outshone by them. Have a white frock washed. You cannot have another at present."

But Uncle Philip was not so blind in masculine ignorance as not to feel deeply with his niece when the evening came and brought the Ashton girls spick and span in gowns too artistic of form and colour to allow a suggestion of being somewhat worn —brought what was worse, the two eldest Wynnes from the overcrowded rectory in brand-new and most beauteous attire. Mabel said nothing, poor child, though it had been hard to look cheerful in a washed and mended muslin, while Gerald had devoted himself to Kathie Wynne and her sister had been openly admired by the great Lady Dering.

"Those girls were awfully well-dressed," said Gerald at breakfast next morning. "You looked like a little schoolgirl beside them, Mabel."

"More shame for them," said Mr. Austin. "Wynne has trouble enough to find bread for all those children, much less to pay milliners' bills.

"Oh, their dresses cost next to nothing."

"Next to nothing !" cried Mabel. "Why, Mrs. Paul would charge at least six guineas each for them."

"Perhaps, but you see they made them themselves for nothing except what the stuff cost. They have learnt the new scientific dressmaking, and they can do anything in that way."

"Then why didn't you make yourself a new dress instead of bothering me ?" asked Uncle Philip of his niece, angry with her for the first time in his life.

"I make a dress !" cried Mabel, as deeply injured at such a miracle being expected of her as if her uncle had requested her to remove a mountain.

"Of course Mabel needn't," Gerald put in defensively ; "but it comes in useful for the Wynnes. They make all the clothes worn at the rectory, from Mrs. Wynne's best dinner-gowns to the baby linen, they told me. They have studied it as a science and passed exams in it."

"And did not Miss Stewart teach you to make dresses, Mabel ?" asked Mr. Austin anxiously.

"Of course not. She didn't know how."

"Not in her ancient curriculum," laughed Gerald.

There was no more said on that subject for the time, and it was saved from cropping up again by a much more serious matter. Gerald was out riding with Mabel and Florrie Ashton, when his horse shied at a steam roller and threw him. Mabel, who rode beautifully in a quiet ladylike way—of course she was not allowed to hunt—dismounted and cried, "Oh dear! Gerald, are you very much hurt? Do get up? What shall I do? I will stay with him, Florrie, if you will ride somewhere for help. Oh! please don't touch him, you will hurt him, and it is so dreadful to see. Is he dead? Is he bleeding? I dare not look."

For Florrie had already dismounted and had turned Gerald over and found that his arm was broken. "Ride as fast as you can for a carriage," she ordered the pale trembling Mabel, while she tore up her own handkerchief and Gerald's into strips. "I'll have his arm set before you get back."

And it *was* set and almost comfortable when Mabel returned, and Gerald was taken home; and his anxious father was asking the family doctor to recommend a nurse in the teeth of the patient's objections, when Florrie said, "Let me nurse him. I'm all properly qualified; am I not, Dr. Grey?"

"Yes, let Florrie nurse me if she will be so kind," put in Gerald.

"Well, since her treatment has been so successful so far, I think it would be the best plan," said the doctor.

"Thank you very much, Miss Ashton," said Mr. Austin stiffly; "but I assure you Mabel can do all that is required, if no professional nurse is necessary."

"A nurse *is* necessary," said Dr. Grey; "poor little Mabel won't be much good in this case. But I can thoroughly recommend Miss Ashton. She has certificates from the London Hospital."

But Mr. Austin would not be persuaded. He was in a frenzy of horror at the idea! To instal a young lady of twenty-two at the bedside of a young gentleman of twenty-three, the idea made his blood freeze! And the danger to Gerald! What if he should take a fancy to this bold young woman who, instead of fainting at the sight of blood as she *should* have done, had taken upon herself to set his son's broken arm and then to offer to nurse him. Oh! it was dreadful to see what women were coming to. An elderly nurse of long professional standing in the county town

was sent for. She got drunk, and was dismissed two days later, and Gerald progressed slowly, very slowly, towards convalescence in solitude.

When he was promoted to the sofa and his coat and a red silk sling, he suggested that Mabel should bear him company. This was gladly conceded and Mabel took her place with her work by his side.

It was very pleasant to see her there, so sweet and pretty and fresh, so pleased to see him better, so pitying for all he had gone through. But on the second day of her gentle attendance, having exhausted the tale of Nurse Grig's iniquities and of the small events that had gone on out of doors since his accident, Gerald began to feel cross and bored. "If you cannot think of anything else to talk about, can't you read to me?" he asked ungratefully.

Mabel was quite pleased at the idea. She had been wofully conscious of the exhaustion of her conversational material. It was much harder work to sit and talk than she could have imagined. "What shall I read?" she asked, looking round for some good book. She had had some experience in reading to invalids, not of course in dirty cottages where infection might abound and "sights not fit for her to see," but to one or two nice clean old women in almshouses. And she had always to read good books to people who were ill: sermons, or *Sunday at Home* articles if they were not ill enough or poor enough for the Bible.

"Read this," said Gerald pointing to a review. "Herbert Stow brought it this morning. There's a capital article in it by a friend of Mrs. Charlie Grey's: a review of Vera Blanc's famous book 'Only a Holiday.' Every one is talking of it."

It looked very dry and uninteresting and was full of figures, and Mabel was nearly sure it must be something her uncle would not approve of her reading if it had any remote connection with Mrs. Charlie Grey, whom he held in absolute abhorrence. But she would like very much to see something that somebody had written whom somebody knew. As with all provincials, Maydswell was in her eyes the hub of the universe. Maydswell society was "the world," and an author, or artist, or journalist known to any member of that society was raised to a pinnacle of interest and brought into a glare of light out of the vague obscurity inhabited by his brothers of pen and pencil, who were only a few incorrectly remembered names.

The book reviewed was a philosophical romance on marriage. Mabel read, first interested, then disappointed, then shocked. *Her* idea of marriage was a period of thrilling interest in tennis parties, a period of congratulation, distinction and envy of her friends, and a period of settling down in a pretty new house full of lovely furniture, with more and smarter gowns than she had ever possessed in her life. Marriage in the eyes of Vera Blanc and her enthusiastic reviewer meant something quite different. A simple choice between two only alternatives. Misery, tragedy and disgrace, or a common sense making the best of a situation that could not be receded from on the ground of complete disillusion and disappointment. Fortunately for the sake of her own illusions, the review read so extremely dry that her attention wandered off after her comprehension, and she reached the end having gleaned very small fruits from its wisdom.

"Well, you can manage to send a fellow to sleep, any way," said Gerald, waking up when her voice stopped.

"It was so very dry, but you asked me to read it," she remarked apologetically.

Gerald was certainly very cross. No wonder, poor boy, having to lie day after day in the house. Dr. Grey said he did not get his strength up as he ought; he must eat more. Gerald said how could he eat more when nothing fit to eat was ever sent up to his room? His father was unhappy and anxious and scolded the cook, but the cook was a person of limited imagination, and knew of no dishes more dainty than she had already set before the invalid. The county town confectioner was appealed to, but Gerald turned in loathing from her cates, and got thinner and crosser every day.

Fortunately these days were not many. Little birds whispered to kindly neighbours of the culinary deadlock at the Hall. Then tempting little hampers came across from Mrs. Ashton's house, and Gerald found his lost appetite, and fattened and sweetened, and at last was well enough to walk over to Maydswell Lodge and thank Mrs. Ashton in person.

But his father, now that he was safe and well, had time to be indignant at his son letting himself be put under any such obligation, and falling into a trap set so openly in his sight by Mrs. Ashton and Florrie. He had had no idea where the delicacies came from, or he never would have allowed such impertinent

interference. His cook was paid twice the wage Mrs. Ashton's received.

"But the cook didn't make the things," said Gerald. "Kathie and Florrie did, and they enjoyed the fun of it. We are really under no obligation, except to be grateful for kindness received."

"Those girls cook? Impossible! They are rank blue-stockings."

"They took prizes for cookery at South Kensington, for all that. You might let Mabel go to them for lessons."

Then Gerald betook himself to his chambers in the Temple, and Mabel tried to throw off depression under a new sense of failure and imperfection, by looking through her wardrobe and discussing with her dressmaker what was required for the winter campaign, and getting what amusement she could out of the carefully selected books with which her uncle provided her. She was afraid to mention the want of new frocks for the winter since the failure of her last application. But her uncle opened the subject, and bade her be provided with whatever was necessary.

"She really must be settled this winter," he said to his sister, Mrs. Singleton, who had orders to select Mabel's evening dresses at Debenham and Freebody's.

Mrs. Singleton repeated this decree to Mabel, who was very angry. She had had a good deal of time for meditation between Gerald's departure and the official announcement of winter fashions.

"I am not going to be married at all," she said. "So if Uncle Philip is tired of me, I will go and work for my living. Gerald won't marry to please him, so why should I? A girl has as much right to choose her life as a man. Marriage is nothing but downright misery, or making the best of a bad job."

This awful heresy astonished and amused her aunt, but when repeated to her uncle nearly annihilated him.

"Where did she get such ideas?" he asked, nearly in tears.

"Out of Vera Blanc's book, she told me. Gerald lent it to her, or taught her the precepts thereof."

"Vera Blanc! Mabel know anything of Vera Blanc! A woman who ought to be put in the stocks or the pillory, or do penance in a white sheet—a person not fit to be mentioned to a decent woman. And Mabel has read her!"

"There is nothing against Vera Blanc," said Mrs. Singleton.

"She writes clever books—*fin de siècle*, certainly, but no harm in them or in her."

"There is harm in all those women. They are all alike—not a pennyworth of decency amongst 'em."

Mr. Austin judged it best to say nothing to Mabel yet of Vera Blanc and her book. The hunt ball was coming on, a very great social event at Maydswell, and Gerald was to come down for it, and every nerve should be strained to get Mabel's fate settled there and then. She would be utterly helpless if circumstances should require her to make a living. She herself was much too full of the ball to remember Vera Blanc and her heresies. Uncle Philip would speak to Gerald about the business—he was the culprit, and it should be shown to him that only one way remained to him by way of reparation for having sullied that white innocence, by introducing her to the horrible book: he must marry her, and put her safe out of reach of any further mischief.

But though his room was made ready and his ticket bought, he had never yet said definitely that he was coming. At last, on the very morning before the ball, there was a letter from him.

"Then he *is* coming, is he?" asked Mabel anxiously.

"Of course he *is* coming," said Uncle Philip, opening the letter.

Mabel watched to see. Why, surely the mere refusal to attend a hunt ball could not call forth such an agonized groan, could not blanch her uncle's ruddy face to such a ghastly pallor?

"It is nothing—nothing, my dear—nothing for you to know," he gasped, while Mabel clung to him and implored him to be calm and tried to possess herself of the letter. Then he suddenly controlled himself, and said abruptly, "After all, you must know sooner or later. Gerald is not coming to the ball—because—in fact, he says it is his wedding day—to-day!"

II.

"I will disinherit him," said Mr. Austin solemnly. "I will cut him off with a shilling! I will never allow you to speak to him. He has disgraced himself—disgraced me—disgraced you."

"Is it disgraceful to be married," asked Mabel coolly. "It is generally foolish—but *disgraceful*?"

"Oh, you miserable girl!" cried Philip in a new access of wrath, her words adding unconsciously fuel to the flame. "This is what your modern women bring men to! This is the sort of woman a well brought up young man chooses to marry!"

"Who is she?"

"Who is she? A woman who writes—not even poetry, which might be harmless—but novels, newspapers, all of the worst description!"

"Does Gerald say *that*?"

"He says she makes five hundred a year, *at least*. He thinks it will, please me! Please me! As if she could make all that money unless she pandered to the depraved modern taste! But read for yourself. I see he has the impudence to send some sort of a message to you."

Mabel read eagerly, "Tell Mab that Edith wrote something she has read—the review in the *Lyceum* of Vera Blanc's novel, 'Only a Holiday.'"

Gerald's letter was answered by being returned to him, and his name was forbidden at Maydswell Hall. His allowance was stopped, which gave his father little pleasure, since he had "five hundred a year *at least*" to fall back upon. Mabel went to the hunt ball and to other balls, and skated and danced through the winter, and marrying and giving in marriage went on merrily all around, but nothing came to her poor little net. There was not only disappointment out of doors, but there was gloom at home. Mr. Austin had more troubles than one on his shoulders. Money embarrassments had turned out more serious than he expected. The household must be reduced, a cheaper cook engaged, and Mabel must make her own dresses.

"And I cannot see why you shouldn't give an eye to the kitchen, too," he grumbled. "That woman sends up dinners unfit for a pig, and the housekeeping bills are as long as ever. Why cannot I have dinners like what Mrs. Ashton gave us last night? Nothing could be more perfect, and yet her cook was kitchenmaid here only last year."

"The girls do the cooking," said Mabel. "I have never learnt how, but of course I can try now."

Then her eternal fancy-work and useless water-colours were grievances.

"I never see you with a scrap of useful work in your hands,"

he complained. "Why don't you hem dusters? That must be easy work enough."

"There are none needed. The last came already hemmed," she explained.

The discomforts of the house were indeed a severe course of discipline to go through. The cookery went from bad to worse, Mabel having taken to assist thereat; the house was dull and comfortless; expenses kept up; and all through there was the hidden ache at the heart—the yearning after his boy. So when a note came from Gerald in June announcing the arrival of his first-born son, with a pious little hope expressed that he might grow up after his grandfather's own heart, Philip Austin felt a sharp, irresistible longing to rescue that little brand from the burning and begin at once to set the infant feet in the way they should walk—a way far removed from that of his reprehensible mother.

'I will go up to see Gerald and the boy,' he announced rather shamefacedly. "I must not flinch from duty because it is painful."

Gerald was no longer living in the Temple but in a modest flat in Museum Mansions, Great Russell Street. He was out when his father called, and Mrs. Austin and the baby were invisible, but he was informed that he could see Miss Trevor.

"The woman's sister, I suppose," he thought shrinking, but he manfully faced duty (and the chance of satisfying some curiosity) and he was admitted into Miss Trevor's presence.

Well, Miss Trevor and the general aspect of the place surprised him a good deal; might almost have pleased him, indeed, if it were not so disagreeable to find people flying in the face of one's firm and thoroughly reasonable anticipations.

Instead of the mixture of slatternliness and smartness, dinginess and tawdriness, dirt and finery he expected, the stained carpets cracked pottery, dusty bulrushes, and all the twopenny-halfpenny æstheticism that for reasons of his own he associated with Bohemia, he found a pretty drawing-room, filled with fresh flowers, in fleckless order, tastefully furnished, decorated with good water-colours and engravings, and undoubted pickings-up from foreign lands. He found a bright-looking, ladylike girl in a grey tailor gown, with soft smooth hair and simple manners, who was busy with some very fine needlework, her knee being so piled

with snowy lawn that it was a matter of difficulty to rise to receive her visitor.

Edith, she said, was doing very well and the baby a little duck. She would fetch him at once for inspection ; and she did, and looked such a picture of sweet young motherliness as she held him in her arms and smiled over the little bundle of lace and flannel that Mr. Austin was half-crying with regret that Gerald had not seen this sister first. But she laughed when he alluded to "your sister" as the infant's mother. "I am not her sister ; I am Naomi Trevor," she explained. She was only Edith's greatest friend, and had come to be with her and lend a helping hand as the baby had taken them by surprise, and his clothes were not ready, and the cook had just decamped, and Edith had no one about her but the nurse and the charwoman.

Mr. Austin remembered Edith's luncheon having passed him on the stairs ; its daintiness an evidence, he thought, of profligate extravagance.

"The charwoman is a good cook," he observed.

Naomi laughed. "I am the cook," she said.

He was armed against surprise this time and remarked, "South Kensington, I suppose. I don't quite hold with these modern fads."

She laughed again. "I never studied cookery as an art, I fear. Part came by nature, as it must to all women, and the rest I learnt from my mother. We were naval orphans and had to do our best to stretch a tiny income out wide."

Mr. Austin was charmed. Poor Mabel had had no mother. That was enough to account for her few shortcomings. What man could do he had done by her, but he began to see—well, several things.

Here Gerald came in, so bright and handsome, so proud of his son, and so pleased with his father.

Mr. Austin consented to dine with him, after protest against extra trouble at such a time, but Gerald and Naomi laughed at the idea of trouble. Naomi was engaged all the afternoon between cooking the dinner, completing the layette, and helping to nurse Edith ; but she appeared at dinner daintily dressed (*he knew* she had made her own dress, though he dared not ask), fresh as a rose and full of bright talk. The little dinner was exquisitely cooked. Philip Austin had never spent a pleasanter evening in his life.

"What a friend that girl would be for Mabel. I must ask her to come for a month to Maydswell. She will want country air after all this nursing and cooking. I hope she will teach the poor child to be something like herself."

The invitation was given and accepted. Gerald looked queer but pleased. Edith's mother was coming, she had been telegraphed for from Ireland where she was visiting another daughter; Naomi had been overworked and the change would do her good. He and Edith and the boy would follow at convenience for the christening of the heir.

The evening before Gerald's arrival at Maydswell a surprising thing had happened. Philip Austin had represented to Miss Trevor how as a boon and a blessing she had come to the house. Mabel was so fond of her, had learnt so much from her. The whole place was better and brighter for her presence. When she went gloom and desolation would fill her place. Would she not, for Mabel's sake as well as his own, come back *for always*?

Naomi promised to come back *for always*, but expressed herself a little doubtful as to whether Mabel would like the arrangement as much as she and Philip would.

"Mabel will marry soon now," he said; "*you* will manage that—I mean, thanks to you, she is much more attractive, so much more useful, domestic; *better*: she got some shocking notions against marriage into her head lately, but nothing can drive them out so surely as seeing such a happy married life as ours will be; such a perfect example of a wife as *yourself*. It was that woman Vera Blanc."

"*What!*" shocked and starting back.

"I beg your pardon for mentioning her, my dear, but you see you are almost married."

"But don't you know? Oh! this is fame! Mr. Austin—Philip, I am Vera Blanc!"

The Derby China Factories.

A HISTORICAL SKETCH.

By The REV. FRED J. AUSTIN.

AMONG the many towns that have become famous as the birth-place or nursery of great commercial enterprises, Derby holds an honourable position. Here John Lombe erected the first silk mill in England, which, though deserted long ago, still stands on an island on the banks of the Derwent, as a striking memorial of a romantic adventure, by which the manufacture of silk was introduced into Great Britain. Here Arkwright and Strutt completed the invention of the spinning-machine, which gave so great an impetus to the cotton trade. Here Strutt invented his noted "Derby Ribbed Stocking Machine;" and here the manufacture of porcelain was very early brought to perfection. Derby cannot, it is true, lay claim to have founded this industry, but it soon absorbed the first two important china manufactories that had been set up in England, and it was here that the celebrated "biscuit body" was invented, which was so much prized for its ivory-like appearance and semi-transparency.*

The early history of the Derby china works, as of many similar undertakings, is wrapped in obscurity. Coarse brown ware had been made in Derby for centuries—according to some, prior to the Norman Conquest—and the Pot works at Cockpit Hill had attained considerable reputation. Towards the middle of the last century, also, a man in humble circumstances, who lived in Lodge Lane (one of the poorer districts of Derby), used to make small china figures, such as cats, lambs, birds, &c., which he baked in the oven of a pipemaker in the neighbourhood.

* The Bow and Chelsea works here referred to were commenced somewhere about 1740-1743. One John Dwight, of Fulham, took out a patent in 1671 for "the mistery of transparent earthenware, comonly known by the names of porcelaine, or China and Persian ware," which he again protected in 1684, but he appears to have met with no encouragement.

The founder, however, of the china works was William Duesbury, a native of Longton, in Staffordshire. Duesbury's father was a currier, but the son appears to have acquired, through residence in the Potteries, some knowledge of the manufacture of earthenware and of the art of enamelling. He exhibited also considerable ability as an artist. The precise date of his removal to Derby is not known, but it must have been about 1750. Mr. Llewellyn Jewitt, recently deceased, had in his possession the draft of an agreement drawn up on January 1st, 1756, "between John Heath, of Derby, in the county of Derby, gentleman ; Andrew Planché, of the same place, china maker ; and William Duesbury, of Longton, in the county of Stafford, enameller," which records that "ye said John Heath hath ye day of ye date of these presents delivered in as a stock ye sum of one thousand pounds to be made and employed between them for ye carrying on ye said art of making china wares." The Andrew Planché herein named—probably a French refugee—is supposed to be identical with the maker of china figures before referred to, and there is a tradition that Duesbury enlisted his services when he started in business in Derby, but his name does not occur again in connection with the china works.* It is doubtful, moreover, whether the above agreement (which was only made for ten years) was ever ratified, though at first the firm was occasionally described as "Duesbury and Heath" and "Duesbury and Co."†

Two years later we find that John Heath and two others were carrying on the pottery works at Cockpit Hill, and this continued till about 1780, when, he and his brother Christopher

* In 1804 he was living at Bath, and a few years later he died.

† Mr. J. E. Nightingale, F.S.A., in a work entitled "Contributions towards the History of Early English Porcelain," printed for private circulation (1881) speaks of a porcelain manufactory at Longton Hall, Staffordshire, which in 1756 had attained considerable importance, and suggests that the above agreement may have referred to *this* place, *not* to Derby, Mr. Duesbury being described in it as belonging to Longton. But the name of Duesbury does not occur in any of the announcements respecting the Longton Hall Factory, which evidently had a very brief existence. Mr. Frank Jessop, a great grandson of Duesbury's, writing in 1865, says that "Mr. William Duesbury, four generations ago, was the proprietor of the china works at Chelsea, Bow, *Longton*, and Derby." But this statement needs verification

becoming bankrupt, Duesbury purchased a large quantity of the earthenware. Some of it he sold in Dublin, and the remainder he removed to his own warehouse, where it was stored for nearly fifty years, and finally sold in one lot to a dealer in the town.

One of the earliest references to the Derby china works occurs in a scarce book entitled, "A Short Tour in the Midland Counties of England in the Summer of 1772 and 1774," in which it is stated that the manufacture of porcelain in Derby employs nearly 100 men and boys. Hutton, in his "History of Derby" (written in 1791), says, "Porcelain began about the year 1750. There is only one manufactory, which employs about 70 people. The clay is not of equal fineness with the foreign, but the workmanship exceeds it. The arts of drawing and engraving have amazingly improved within these last thirty years. The improvements of the porcelain keep pace with these. They adhere to nature in their designs, to which the Chinese have not attained. A dessert service of 120 pieces was recently fabricated here for the Prince of Wales." The date thus given is confirmed by Pilkington, who, writing in 1789, intimated that the manufacture of porcelain was begun by Mr. Duesbury "about forty years ago."

But, although so little is known about the origin of the enterprise, its growth was evidently rapid and extensive, for in January, February, March, and April, 1758, a great variety of new figures, "allowed by good judges to be nearest to Dresden," were consigned to London to Mr. Thomas Williams, who appears to have been then the London agent, and who announced in his advertisement that the manufactory had been enlarged, and that double the number of hands were employed.*

From the first, Duesbury gathered around him skilful work-

* The earliest notice extant respecting Derby china is contained in an advertisement of a sale by auction in the *Public Advertiser*, Dec. 1756, several times repeated, in which the figures are affirmed to be equal to Dresden. In the spring of 1757 also we find further references to the Derby manufactory, and especially to the *figures*, which were evidently a speciality. It is curious, however, that those now met with are all of a later date. It has been suggested, by way of explanation, that some of the early specimens attributed to Bow may really have been made in Derby. The consignments to London by Duesbury in 1763 were on a very extensive scale.

men, and determined that only the most perfect ware should leave the premises. In 1769 he purchased the Chelsea works, which had attained considerable celebrity during the twenty-five years of their existence, and a few years later he purchased the Bow works also. In addition to these, he held a small factory at Kentish Town, which had belonged to a man named Giles, and one at Vauxhall. Thus he became the largest manufacturer of porcelain in the kingdom. The Bow works were closed in 1775,* and the models, moulds, and implements were transferred to Derby. The Chelsea works were carried on by Duesbury till 1774, when they too were closed, the kilns were taken down, and Derby became the sole centre of activity, the best of the workmen, together with the stock, being removed thither.

Among the various productions at the Bow or Chelsea works were several spirited figures, e.g., Quin as Falstaff, Garrick as Richard II.; Frederick, Duke of Cumberland, striding triumphantly over the Pretender; John Wilkes, &c. Some of these were designed by eminent sculptors. John Bacon was, in 1755, at the age of fourteen, apprenticed to one Crispe, who executed designs for the Bow works, and was taught by him to model groups, such as, "Deer and a Holly Tree;" "A Bird and a Bush;" "Shepherd and Shepherdess," and beasts and birds of various kinds. He was also engaged in painting figures on plates and dishes. And it is interesting to learn that for six or seven years after Duesbury purchased the factory Bacon modelled for him, receiving in one year for his work the sum of £75 7s. 2d.

Sir James Thornhill and the elder Nollekins were both engaged in connection with the works at Chelsea. The son of the latter informs us that the clay was then obtained from China as ballast, but that when the Chinese discovered the real object for which it was sought, they would not allow the captains to have any more, and that thus the business declined. It will be readily

* Mr. Crowther, the only remaining partner in the Bow works, became bankrupt in 1763, and the stock was sold in May of the following year. But he appears to have retained the manufactory, and carried on the business until 1775, when he sold the entire concern to Duesbury. The sale of the Chelsea works was announced in May, 1769, and in the autumn of that year Mr. Sprimont, the proprietor, ceased his connection with the factory. The purchase was completed by Duesbury, Feb. 5, 1770.

understood that the acquisition of these manufactories with the plant and artists marked an epoch in the history of Derby china.* Many of the figures subsequently made at Derby up to the close of the works were reproductions of the original models. Among the staff at Chelsea, who afterwards moved to Derby, were two painters of high repute—Zachariah Boreman, who has been called “the father of china painting,” and Edward Withers, who was regarded as the best flower painter of the day. The former was specially noted for his landscapes and birds. The latter was the painter of the “Rodney jug,” which was used for serving ale at the monthly meetings of the China Men’s Club for a period of 80 years.† Boreman had a pupil named William Billingsley, a man of great ability, who introduced many of the early improvements in ceramics. These, with others of kindred talent, contributed largely to the reputation which the factory so long maintained for beauty of design and colouring.

In 1764, *printing* on china was introduced at Derby by Richard Holdship, of Worcester, but the process did not find favour with Duesbury, though it has since been extensively practised, he preferring that all the work should be done by hand.

In June, 1773, Duesbury opened a warehouse at No. 1, Bedford Street, Covent Garden. In the same year it is said that the Derby factory was visited by the king, when Duesbury acquired the right to mark his ware with a crown. Whether this be true or not, he certainly enjoyed Royal patronage.

In September, 1777, Dr. Samuel Johnson, then 68 years of age, visited the works. The incident is thus referred to by Boswell.

* It has sometimes been asserted that the excellence of the Derby fabric dates from the time that the Chelsea workmen and models were brought there. This is a grave error. The truth is that the Derby works had risen to such eminence and had attained such a degree of excellence as to more than rival those of Chelsea, which in consequence began to decline. Then Duesbury purchased them. The Chelsea “body” was not so compact as that made at Derby. See Jewitt’s “Ceramic Art of Great Britain.”

† This jug was ten inches high, and held 5 pints, imperial measure. The spout was formed of the head and cocked hat of Admiral Rodney, beneath which was inscribed in gold, the date of the victory which he achieved over the French in the West Indies, April 12, 1782. The body of the jug was embellished with two groups of flowers, which nearly covered it, one being placed on each side. This was not the only jug made to commemorate this event, but it was the largest, and was an admirable specimen of ceramic art.

"When we arrived at Derby, Dr. Butters accompanied us to see the manufactory of china there. I admired the ingenuity and delicate art with which a man fashioned clay into a cup, a saucer or a tea-pot, while a boy turned round a wheel to give the mass rotundity. I thought this as excellent in its species of power as making good verses in its species. Yet I had no respect for this potter, neither, indeed, has a man of any extent of thinking for a mere verse-maker, in whose numbers, however perfect, there is no poetry, no mind. The china was beautiful, but Dr. Johnson justly observed that it was too dear ; for that he could have vessels of silver of the same size, as cheap as what were here made of porcelain." What would the learned lexicographer have said, if he could have known that these very articles, which he considered so expensive, would be valued at their weight in gold ?

The factory was situated in the Nottingham Road, at the foot of St. Mary's Bridge. Hutton, from whose rare and valuable local history we have already quoted, says :—"The spot upon which this elegant building stands, which is internally replete with taste and utility, was once the freehold of my family. It cost £35, but the purchaser, my grandfather's brother, being unable to raise more than £28, mortgaged it for £7. Infirmity, age and poverty obliged him to neglect the interest ; when in 1743 it fell into the hands of my father, as heir-at-law, who being neither able nor anxious to redeem it, conveyed away his right to the mortgagee for a guinea." Early in the present century a larger building was erected, about 70 feet distant on the eastern side of the old factory, with which it was connected by means of a narrow passage, covered with iron wire-work, and called the "Bird-cage Walk." Here, for a short time, cream ware and earthenware were manufactured. For some years the old factory was closed, but in 1819 it was opened again and partly occupied. In 1835 this portion of the works was finally abandoned, and ten years later the kilns and other buildings were pulled down and a nunnery was erected on the spot, at a cost, it is said, of £10,000. Two magnificent vases were ordered by Dr. (afterwards Cardinal) Wiseman, and presented to Pope Pius IX. in commemoration of this event ; but the nunnery had a comparatively brief existence, being demolished in 1863. The new premises, which had a frontage of 200 feet, and extended about 300 feet from the Nottingham Road, are also no longer standing. Some of the workshops have

been transformed into small tenements, and all that remains to mark the site is the arch adjoining the building now known as "The Liversage Arms Inn," which formed the entrance, under a large warehouse, into the factory. It is to be regretted that no view of the works has been preserved. Two large oil paintings were once executed by George Robertson, a landscape painter employed at the factory, one depicting the frontage in the Nottingham Road, and the other the large warehouse, with its many windows and some of its workshops, as seen from the inside of the factory yard, with figures and hogsheads of china in the foreground. They were done by order of Mr. Bloor, a subsequent proprietor of the works (of whom more will be said hereafter), to place in the show-room then occupied at 34, Old Bond Street, London, where they hung for many years. The space, however, being required, they were consigned to a cellar, where the damp destroyed them.

William Duesbury died in November, 1786, and was succeeded by his son William, under whose management the factory maintained its position as second to none in the kingdom for the quality of the ware and the beauty of its decoration. This is evident from the large orders executed both for Royalty and the nobility. George III. and Queen Charlotte, who had given extensive commissions to the father, continued their patronage to the son; and services were also made for the Prince of Wales (afterwards George IV.), the Duke of Devonshire, William Pitt, and many of the leading families in the country. Failing health at length made it necessary that assistance should be secured, and Duesbury entered into partnership with Michael Kean, an Irishman, to whom is attributed the invention, or at least the introduction, of the "biscuit body," to which reference has been already made. Kean fully seconded the efforts of his partner to preserve the high standard of excellence that had been already acquired. He was a gold medallist of the Society of Fine Arts at Dublin, and had shown much taste and skill as a portrait painter in London. On business grounds, therefore, Duesbury had reason to congratulate himself on his choice, though the intercourse of the two men is said to have been marred by domestic differences.

This second Duesbury died in 1796 or 1797, leaving three sons and two daughters. The eldest son, however, was then only

ten years of age, and therefore too young to take his father's place. It would appear also that even subsequently he showed no inclination to assume this position ; but in 1798 Kean married the widow, and the business was continued under the style of "Duesbury and Kean."

In 1809 the factory was advertised for sale, and was purchased (in 1810 or 1811) by Robert Bloor, who had been clerk and salesman to the late firm. The conditions of purchase included the payment of £5,000 in instalments, and also annuities to the family of the former proprietors. The means adopted to raise these amounts, though temporarily successful, inflicted permanent injury on the business itself. The Duesburys, as we have intimated, were very particular as to the quality of the goods sold. All that exhibited the slightest defect through firing were put on one side as *seconds ware*. By the time that Bloor assumed the management, these had been allowed to accumulate to such an extent that their sale was likely to yield a considerable sum. He therefore finished them, and took them to various towns to sell by auction. The sales were conducted by himself at first, with the assistance of a man named Alexander Allan, who subsequently, for more than twenty years, assumed the sole conduct of this portion of the business, visiting the chief towns of Great Britain and Ireland, and even the Channel Islands, so that he was absent from Derby during the greater part of the year. The money was obtained, but the high character which had been won for Duesbury's ware was lost, and from that time the manufactory began to decline. The end, however, was not yet. Bloor was not equal to the Duesburys in artistic knowledge and ability, but he was surrounded by talented workmen ; and though the general style of the patterns was more showy, many services and ornaments were produced possessing considerable merit. Among these may be mentioned a remarkable service of bowls and plates for the Persian Ambassador, made about 1820, and a dessert service for the Earl of Shrewsbury, about 1830. The bowls in the former set were 365 in number, mostly covered with gold, inside and out, and ranging in size from that of an ordinary slop basin to a vessel holding three or four gallons. The insides were burnished, the outsides being embellished with a figured pattern chased on the gold. The rest had a pale rose-coloured ground, with a flowered pattern in chased gold and colour, and a narrow border of dark

blue. The centre of the plates contained an inscription in Persian characters in black. The Earl of Shrewsbury's service contained 250 pieces. The ground was a rich dark green, which had been recently introduced. In the centre of each plate was the family crest and an earl's coronet, and round the border were six small groups of fruit by Steele. All the fruit dishes and centre pieces were raised on feet. A dessert service of a most costly and elaborate description was also executed for Lord Ongley, about 1821, the plates of which averaged five guineas each.

One prominent feature of this period was the extensive manufacture of the pattern called *Japan*, which was rich in gilding and gay in colour. The *Chantilly* pattern, probably so called from the place where it was first produced, was also a general favourite. It consisted of a pink or carnation in the centre of the plate, with smaller sprigs scattered about. The colour of the flower was often blue, but occasionally it was executed in green or rose, and sometimes the plate was finished with a gold rim or line. At this time, too, the celebrated *biscuit* figures were in great request.

On retiring from the business Michael Kean left Derby. He died in London in 1823.

In 1828 Bloor was afflicted with mental derangement, and from that time till 1844 the sole responsibility fell upon his cashier and general manager, Mr. James Thomason, who proved himself a thoroughly faithful and capable representative. During his management two important works were executed which are worthy of special notice. Shortly after the passing of the Reform Bill in 1832 the work-people at the Derby factory, wishing to show their appreciation of that measure, decided to present the King with a pair of large vases. A subscription list was opened, a design chosen, and the vases were made. They were thirty-three inches high, bell-shaped, and elaborately decorated with dark blue or royal purple, and richly gilt. On either side were large panels containing views of Windsor Castle by Daniel Lucas (for quarter of a century prior to the close of the works one of the principal landscape painters), and the seats of the chief ministers to whose efforts the passing of the Bill was due. The vases were mounted on pedestals, and fitted with covers, on one of which stood a figure emblematic of Wisdom, and on the other of Justice. The gift, however, was declined, His Majesty's

ministers stating that the King could not receive presents expressive of political sentiments. The vases were afterwards sold, and the money which had been subscribed for them was returned to the donors.

In 1841-2 a handsome dessert service was made for Her Majesty the Queen. The border of the pieces was chrome green, each containing six small panels, in which were painted birds, insects, and small groups of flowers. These were chiefly executed by Horatio Steele. The ground between the panels was gilded in embossed gold, and chased in the style of Sèvres. The comports were eight inches in height, supported by intertwined cornucopias. There were several mounted plates, some with two, and the largest with three tiers of plates, and on the top a vessel to hold flowers, altogether thirty inches high. (The writer is indebted for this and other descriptions of the ware produced to a scarce work by the late John Haslem, who for many years was engaged at the factory.)

In 1844 Mr. Thomas Clark married Mr. Bloor's granddaughter, and assumed the oversight of the works; but in 1848 they were closed, after an existence of about 100 years, during the greater part of which they had enjoyed a national and even a world-wide fame.

The ware, notwithstanding the observation of Hutton (which may have referred to the period before Cookworthy's discovery of china clay and china stone was generally utilized)*, may be described as very transparent and of fine quality. One of its chief characteristics is the bright blue which was often introduced upon the border or edge of the articles, the ground being usually plain. Indeed gold and blue were brought to a degree of beauty at Derby which had never before been attained in this country. At one time porcelain thimbles were made in large numbers. Ornamental mirror frames were also in great demand; and the

* Cookworthy discovered china clay (which answers to the Chinese *Kaolin*) near Helstone, in Cornwall, in 1755, and some time after the china stone (which answers to the Chinese *Petunste*) at Tregonnin Hill, in the same county. In 1768 he took out a patent for "the sole working and vending of porcelain so manufactured," which he sold to Mr. Richard Champion, of Bristol, in 1772, though he retained some interest in the Bristol works at least till 1778. Previous to this discovery all English china was composed artificially.

figures formed of the *biscuit paste*, which were peculiar to Derby, were said to rival in beauty and elegance those made at Sèvres. The use of this "biscuit" body was discontinued before the close of the factory, because of the time and cost attending its production, and the materials formerly used were again employed; but the figures thus made are of a more chalky white colour, and can therefore be readily distinguished. The discontinuance of the manufacture was followed by the loss of the receipt for its composition. The ingredients were known, but not the proportions. Experiments, however, with a view to regaining it were subsequently made by John Mountford, an old Derby potter, then in the service of Messrs. Copeland; and though he did not succeed in this, his efforts resulted in the discovery of the beautiful *Parian* body, which bears so close a resemblance to marble, and is regarded as a valuable acquisition to ceramic art. At the time of the Great Exhibition of 1851 Mountford's discovery was attributed to Mr. Battam, the art manager at Copeland's. A controversy followed, but Mountford fairly succeeded in establishing his claim. The "biscuit" receipt has since been found in an old book belonging to Fairbanks, the former manager of the pottery department at Derby, and is in the possession of Mr. Sampson Hancock, of whom further mention will be made presently. The cause, however, which led to the abandonment of the composition naturally stands in the way of its being resumed.

The number of persons employed at the old factory has been variously given, and has sometimes been considerably exaggerated. If we may judge from the list of subscribers to the "King's Vases," in 1832, the number at that time was between 170 and 180. There may have been more at an earlier date, but it is doubtful whether the total ever exceeded 200.

A few of the artists have been already mentioned—Boreman, Billingsley, George Robertson, Daniel Lucas, Edward Withers, and Thomas and Horatio Steele. Of these, the first four excelled as landscape painters, and to them must be added the names of Hill (who worked admirably, though he had lost the first three fingers of his right hand), Robert and John Brewer, Cuthbert Lawton, McLachlan, William Cotton, William Corden, Henry L. Pratt, Jesse Mountford, John and Daniel Lucas (sons of the above), Abrott, and Prince, all of whom at different periods gave special attention to this branch of art, though some of them were

proficient in other subjects also—*e.g.*, Boreman painted birds, and shipping and marine views; John Brewer and Cuthbert Lawton painted figures and hunting scenes; William Cotton occasionally depicted Dutch scenes; and William Corden drew Continental cities, portraits and figures. The names of Banford and Complin also occur among the early artists, the former being described as one of the best hands, to whom the most costly work was entrusted; the latter as a painter of landscapes, flowers, animals, and birds, but chiefly of fruit. The name of Askew is also worthy of mention in this connection. He worked originally at Chelsea, and was one of the first painters of figure subjects and cupids. Withers, as we have already intimated, was specially noted for flower painting. Thomas Steele, the father of Horatio, was in his day unrivalled as a fruit painter on china, but he also distinguished himself as a painter of flowers and insects. He had two sons besides Horatio, viz., Edwin and Thomas, and all three inherited much of their father's talent. William Pegg, the Quaker, was an old and well-known Derby hand, and one of the best flower painters of his age, though on joining the Society of Friends he renounced china-making for a time, considering it a violation of the command: “Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, nor the likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth.” His views, however, were subsequently modified, and he returned to the factory, where he laboured successfully for several years; insects, feathers, and autumnal foliage, as well as flowers, being alike treated by him with wonderful fidelity to form and colour. Among the flower painters may be mentioned another William Pegg (no relation to the above), John Keys (whose father Samuel was an adept at gold arabesque ornamentation, and whose two brothers, Edward and Samuel, became famous modellers), Thomas Tatlow, Philip Clavey, Leonard Lead, James Turner, William Cresswell, Thomas Brentnall, James Farnsworth, William Hall, John Stanesby (especially noted for his roses), William Wheeldon, Moses Webster, Joseph Bancroft, James Hill, William Dexter (who also painted birds, but who is said to have excelled in superior Chinese and Oriental decoration), and James Rowse, who is still living, and engaged in his beloved occupation, though he has exceeded fourscore years. Thomas Tatlow and Joseph Bancroft were also clever in

delineating shells. A brother of the former, named Joseph, was noted for arabesque borders. Richard Dodson and Poulson devoted their talents to the painting of birds, and those done by the former now realize high prices. To the names of figure painters must be added those of William Dixon and William Watson; and to those of the gilders already referred to, the names of Thomas Pegg (brother of the Quaker), John Yates, James Clark, George Mellor, Phillips, Stables, Blood, Cooper, Soar, Till, John Whitaker, William Lucas (son of the elder Daniel), John Lovegrove, William Slater (who also depicted fruit, insects, and armorial bearings), Edward Hopkinson, Joseph Kirkland, Joseph Broughton, Mundy Simpson, &c.

But we must not omit to mention the name of Hancock. John Hancock, sen., was the first to introduce the method of gilding with burnished gold; indeed to him belongs the honour of discovering the gold, silver and steel lustres, which were first used by him while engaged at Mr. Spode's factory at Stoke-upon-Trent. He had three sons, John and George—both of whom were colour makers and ground layers—and James, who, though he did not work in Derby, was the father of Sampson Hancock, who for many years after the close of the Nottingham Road Works, assisted in keeping alive the manufacture of Derby china, and who is still the proprietor of a small factory, to which we shall have occasion to refer more particularly before we conclude. John Hancock, jun., had also a son James, who for some time was consulting manager of the Royal Worcester Porcelain Works, and afterwards the proprietor of the Digris Colour Works in that city. George distinguished himself at Derby not only in colour making and ground laying, but also in the painting of vases. Thus three generations in one family have all been more or less associated with this interesting art.

Hitherto we have spoken only of those engaged in painting and gilding. But the list of artists would be far from complete if we did not add the names of some of those who modelled the figures. Among these, Spangler, Stephan, Coffee, and Hardenburg occupy an honourable position. Spangler and Stephan chiefly excelled in mythological, classical, and historical subjects. The former modelled several large groups from Bartolozzi's engravings of the works of Angelica Kauffmann; the latter modelled, besides other things, several portraits and statuettes of

English generals and admirals. Coffee was noted for his animals, and for grotesque and rustic subjects. He also executed a gigantic terra-cotta figure of *Æsculapius*, which stands on the summit of the Derbyshire General Infirmary. Hardenburg spent only a brief season here, but has left behind him a memorial of his handiwork, viz., a large figure which was placed on the staircase of the Atheneum at Derby. Charles Holmes modelled a set of "The Seasons," and also many small animals, as sheep and lambs. Edward Keys (who has already been incidentally referred to) is said to have modelled twelve or fourteen different statuettes of Dr. Syntax, and portrait statuettes of George IV. and Napoleon. His brother Samuel was the designer of several theatrical figures, e.g., Liston as Paul Pry, Mawworm and Dominie Sampson ; Madame Vestris in "Buy a Broom," &c. He also constructed two large figures just before he left Derby, entitled respectively *Innocence* and *Hebe*. They stood 28 inches high, and were richly decorated by his father in gold and colours, some flowers on one of the pedestals being the work of Leonard Lead. John Whitaker is chiefly known by his figure of a peacock surrounded by flowers, which is an admirable specimen of the modeller's art. To these may be added the names of William Duesbury (not the original proprietor), George Cocker, Blore, Wingfield, John Mountford, &c. Those who desire further information respecting these men may consult John Haslem's work, entitled "The Old Derby China Factory: the Workmen and their Productions," but though our space forbids more extended reference, and some names may have been omitted which deserve recognition, sufficient has been said to justify the statement that the Derby China Factory was "in its own department a real school of industrial art."

In 1849 the plant, &c., in the Nottingham Road was purchased by Mr. Samuel Boyle and transferred to the Staffordshire Potteries. He also engaged many of the old hands, and was thus able to reproduce the patterns and subjects which had so long found favour with the public. But after a time he failed in business, and the moulds and models were again dispersed. The workmen, however, found no difficulty in obtaining good situations, for it was a common saying in the potteries, that "a Derby man has an extra wheel." Two went to America, and set up manufactories there ; and others, as managers, designers, enamel painters, &c., won honourable distinction at home.

The old factory was gone ; but the manufacture of Derby china did not cease. About a fortnight before it was finally closed, in 1848, William Locker, Samuel Fearne, John Henson and Samuel Sharpe (potters), and James Hill and Sampson Hancock (painters and gilders)—all of whom had been engaged and, with the exception of the last, had been apprentices in the Nottingham Road Works—set up a small factory in King Street. William Locker, whose connection with the old firm dated from 1809, when he became clerk and warehouseman, took the lead, and the new firm was styled “Locker and Co.” He died January 10th, 1859, at the age of sixty-two, when the name of the firm was changed to Sharpe and Co. Shortly after, Mr. Stevenson, a draper, was taken into partnership, his name being combined with that of Sharpe ; and at length the name of the firm became Stevenson and Hancock. Mr. Hancock now alone remains, the sole surviving partner, and sole proprietor of the works. The building is unpretentious, and would hardly be observed by a stranger, unless he happened to see the large letters painted on one side of the house, “Sampson Hancock, Old Crown Derby China Works,” followed by the trade mark which is affixed to the ware. The show-room is merely a small shop facing the street ; but it is crowded with articles of exquisite beauty and elegance, many of them being reproductions of old patterns and designs. Any one who ventures to lift the latch and enter will find himself surrounded by objects of interest ; and should he express a desire to inspect the works, he will probably be escorted over the premises by the grandson of the proprietor, who takes a commendable pride in the fact that there is an intimate connection between the present establishment and the past. And indeed several of the old artists have worked here at various times. Mr. Hancock also possesses many relics from Nottingham Road. Old pattern books, old price books, original water-colour drawings by Edwin and Horatio Steele, beetles and butterflies by Pegg, the receipts of Hancock, sen., &c., for glazes and bodies, and the old copper-plate printing press (now consigned to a store-room), were all shown to the writer when he visited the factory. Here is a copy of the “Gardener and his Wife,” modelled originally by Spangler ; and here a copy of the “Travelling Tailor and his Wife,” by the same hand. Here is an exquisite representation of “The Seasons” in process of completion ; here, a Fox head,

modelled and moulded with admirable skill ; and here, a copy of the original Chelsea Falstaff with sword and shield. One of the specialities of the establishment is china basket work, with raised flowers, every leaf, petal and stamen of which is made separately by the fingers, with the aid of one wooden tool and a steel graver. Indeed, all the work here is done by hand. In one room Mr. Hancock may be seen sitting among his workmen, painting designs on china as in days of yore. In another department we encounter John Mountford, the discoverer of the *Parian* body, now in Derby again at his old occupation of potter, though, like his principal, somewhat advanced in years, whose face beams with pleasure as we recall his controversy with Mr. Battam forty years ago. All are *workers* here : employer and employed appear as unassuming as the building which they occupy ; but evidently they are well patronized by many of the leading families in the county, and even at a recent date did some matchings for the Queen.

Interesting, however, as this little factory is, and worthy of notice as a link with the past, it is not the only or the principal establishment in Derby now, for the manufacture of china. The new "Derby Crown Porcelain Works," situated in the Osmaston Road, and belonging to a company, with their splendid show-room and extensive operations, naturally attract the attention of the visitor to the town. This factory owes its origin to Mr. Edward Phillips, one of the directors of the Royal Porcelain Works at Worcester, and was established as recently as 1877. The building was formerly a workhouse, but bears few traces of its original character. Standing in its own grounds, approached through large iron gates, by means of a carriage drive—in the centre and around which is a profusion of shrubs—with its bold, ivy-covered frontage and long rows of windows on either side, it is suggestive of previous wealth rather than poverty, and would be far more likely to be regarded by the uninitiated as an old family mansion than a pauper's retreat. Two tall chimneys, however—one of them considerably in the rear—indicate to the observer that its former uses have given place to something of a more lively and profitable character than the housing of the poor ; while the china ornaments which can be seen through the windows and the large crown of open iron-work which surmounts the building, are further signs of the nature of the work that is

done. At the back, abutting on the Arboretum, are six large kilns, an engine-house, grinding vats, stores of material, &c.; for in this establishment every process requisite for the manufacture of china is carried on—from the grinding of the ingredients which form the clay and the glaze, and of the colours which beautify the ware, to the final sorting and packing for long journeys by land and sea.

Mr. Phillips died in 1881, and was succeeded in the management by Mr. Henry Litherland and Mr. Edward McInnes, under whom the enterprise continues to flourish, giving employment at the present time to about 400 persons. It is beside our purpose to describe here the manufacture of porcelain.* We may say, however, that while old patterns are sometimes revived, new designs are being continually produced, under the superintendence of the art director, Mr. Richard Lunn (formerly of South Kensington), supported by many skilful artists, whose work is quite equal to any of a former age, if it does not in some respects surpass it. Mr. Hogg, also a rising young modeller, who has already obtained a place for his busts at the Royal Academy, has a studio adjoining the works, and renders most useful service to the Company. One vase, designed and modelled by him, and most elaborately chased and gilded, was valued at £200. Many other specimens exhibited here fetch very high prices. Nor is this surprising when it is known that the pencils of such men as Landgraf (now deceased), Count Holtzendorf, and the venerable James Rouse have been at work upon them. Some of the dinner and dessert services are of the most costly description, every plate being a separate work of art; while some of the tea-cups also are perfect gems. The Company are largely patronized by Americans, for whom they have executed large commissions. One of their most interesting and important productions was a dessert service, presented to Mr. Gladstone by the working men of Derby, in December, 1883.

In conclusion a few words may be fittingly added respecting some of the marks by which Derby china may be known. The earliest specimens of Duesbury's work do not appear to have had any distinctive mark, though it is affirmed by some that the letter *D* was sometimes affixed to them, or the word *Derby*.

* This was done in a former article, see *Leisure Hour* for 1887, p. 703.

During what may be termed the "Chelsea-Derby" period, the mark was either a *D* pierced with an anchor, or (more rarely) an anchor surmounted by a crown. But previous to this and up to 1782, we find also, for work done in Derby, the letter *D*, in scrip, and a crown. This mark appears on the Rodney jug, and on a dessert service made for George III. in the early part of his reign. From 1784 to 1796 the ordinary mark was a crown, beneath which were two lines crossing each other, with three dots on either side (which may have been intended to represent crossed swords), and below these the letter *D*. Occasionally the whole was encircled by the words, "DUESBURY, DERBY." After Kean was taken into partnership a monogram consisting of DK was sometimes substituted for the *D*. During the Bloor period the marks were varied. Generally the crown, crossed swords, and initial *D* were employed. Sometimes, however, we find a crown, with the words, "*Bloor, Derby*," in scrip beneath; sometimes the word "DERBY" alone; and sometimes a crown, more carefully delineated than was usual, surmounting a *D* in Roman type. The carelessness with which the mark was often made, led, about 1830, to the adoption of several small copper-plate engravings, of which the most common was an elaborate crown, sometimes encircled by the words, "BLOOR, DERBY," and sometimes with the word "DERBY" only, on a ribbon beneath. The firm in King Street at first used the most familiar mark (crown, crossed swords, and *D*), but at length resorted to a copper-plate engraving, consisting of a circle with buckle, containing the words, "LOCKER & CO., LATE BLOOR," with "DERBY" in the centre. After Mr. Locker's death the same device was employed, with the substitution of the names of other members of the firm. Stevenson and Hancock distinguished their ware by a modification of the old common device. The crown and the *D* remained, but the letters "S H" were added, one on either side of the crossed swords; and the same mark is still used by Mr. Sampson Hancock, the initials being those of his christian and surname, as they were those of the surname of his former partner and of himself.

The trade mark of the new "Derby Crown Porcelain Co." is a crown, beneath which is a monogram, consisting of two *D*'s in scrip, one of which is reversed.

It has been thought by some that the *colour* of the mark indicates the *quality* of the ware. This is erroneous. Originally the

colours employed were gold, or different shades of blue and purple (sometimes rose or green); but since 1810 the mark has usually been done in red—probably on the ground of economy, and because of the facility with which this colour may be worked.

A Buried Sin.

CHAPTER XI.

"MINE ENEMY HATH FOUND ME OUT!"

THE cattle were standing knee-deep in the fresh grass, under the shadow of the tall elm trees, where the sun had not yet been able to penetrate, to drink up all the dew and burn the luxuriant growth with its scorching breath. The meadows were sprinkled with buttercups and daisies, and the hedgerows were clothed with trailing wild flowers, while the foxglove and others of its tribe stood out stiff and firm below. Earth, air and skies all told of the sweet summer time ; the birds and the flowers had things all their own way, and bloomed and sang to their hearts' content. The fields, cut into different shapes and clothed in different tints of green, seemed to cover the landscape like one vast mosaic. Whole colonies of bees were on the wing, drowsily humming, emptying, filling and refilling their honeybags with untiring industry ; and, as Mr. Levison took his way through the peaceful scene, even his restless mind was for the time soothed by the peacefulness of the surrounding scenery.

He was on the road to Kent House, for he would be leaving The Friars on the next day, and he wanted to exchange a few words with Mr. Kent before he departed. It is strange how avarice, like jealousy, grows by what it feeds on. Sir Reginald Thurlowe's will had made him independent ; he was in more affluent circumstances now than he had ever been in before ; yet still he craved for *more*, and he looked with envious eyes on Mr Kent's attractive property. It was only during the last twenty-four hours he had learned that Ruth might step in and take possession of it, and what was hers *he* would vicariously enjoy. Somehow, by some queer twist in his moral nature, he had a gnawing feeling at his heart, as though he had been in a sense defrauded of his heart's desire, and had lost something that he had never really possessed. He believed Mr. Kent would give him a faithful account of his interview with Ruth. He would be a fool if he took Ruth's first answer as final. He could hardly think that a daughter of his, with his blood flowing in her veins,

could be so blind to her own interest as to refuse absolutely a man of Mr. Kent's wealth and generally prosperous condition.

Cogitating on things present, while looking backward as well as forward, Mr. Levison passed through the gates of Kent House. On inquiring for his host of yesterday, he learned that he was not in, but was expected home shortly. He followed the servant across the spacious hall into the drawing-room, where a lady was seated at the far end, near the window, with her hands folded in her lap, doing nothing—perhaps indulging in a siesta, for the weather was sultry, and calculated to reduce elderly ladies to a state of somnolence. For the moment he did not observe there was anybody in the room, but as he naturally stepped forward towards the window, the lady, roused by his entrance, looked up, rose from her chair, and they stood face to face.

With the bland courtesy of one stranger meeting another, Mr. Levison bowed and made some commonplace apology for having disturbed her. She said nothing, but stood silently regarding him. As their eyes met, a startled recognizing look dawned slowly on his face. He took a step backward.

"Good God! Is it—can it be—*Bess Hollingsworth?*" he exclaimed, staring as though doubting the evidence of his own eyes.

"No," she answered slowly, looking him full in the face. "Bess Hollingsworth—*died*, seven-and-twenty years ago."

"Humph! Dramatic, rather! But that you always were. You cannot deceive me, though. I'm not blind, and in spite of years and change I should know that *you* are *you*, though all the world forswore it. In Heaven's name what are you doing here—in *this* house, of all places in the world?"

"Sit down, and I'll tell you," she answered in the most matter-of-fact tone. "I suppose you are surprised to find me here. No doubt you thought, if you ever thought of me or my boys at all—"

"I have thought often," he exclaimed, interrupting her quickly, "and so did *he*," jerking his head with a peculiar expression. "He thought of you to some purpose, too, at the last. Don't you know that you have been advertised for?"

She nodded. "I know. I have seen the advertisement."

"Then why in Heaven's name haven't you answered? Don't you know he has left you five thousand pounds?"

"Because I never mean to claim it," she answered. "The Bess Hollingsworth you knew, and to whom that will refers,

died, as I said before, full seven-and-twenty years ago. *I am not she.*"

"That's all theatrical nonsense, you know," he said. "People can change their names, but not their identity, at will. To all intents and purposes you are that same Bess Hollingsworth who crept away from Knaresborough in the dead of night, first setting fire to her home and leaving it to burn to ashes. Do you know you are still amenable to the law for that bit of business?"

"I have as much right to burn my own house," she answered doggedly, "as to burn my own rubbish-heap or my old clothes when I've done with 'em."

"You were always a devil of a temper," he rejoined. "Do you know, some thought you were all lost in the ruins ; others thought you had got into the river. We searched the one and dragged the other. *He* always said you were in hiding somewhere."

"But he took no trouble to find me. I and mine might have been dead for all that he or you cared."

"Well, here you are—alive, and apparently in clover," he added, looking round the handsomely furnished room. "I am quite mystified. What are you doing here? Housekeeping for my cultivated friend Kent?"

"Yes, I am housekeeping for him, in a way, seeing that I am his mother. You may well start. Your host of yesterday—I saw you walking in the garden together—is my son Reginald!"

"Good Heavens! you take away my breath! This is stranger than any fairy tale I ever read! Well, shake hands; we used to be very good friends once. Sit down—so—and tell me how it has all come about, Bess. It seems so natural to call you 'Bess'—the old days seem to come back."

"The less said about old days the better—I have long ago forgotten them."

"As to-morrow you may forget to-day."

"I shall try, unless you give me cause to remember it."

"If I do, it will be a good cause, depend on that ; but come—we're wasting time ; let us have a talk. I know the wheel of fortune's always turning, but I never thought to find you riding so high atop. You're in luck, at any rate! Did you catch a rich—" Her look frightened the word from his lips, and he added, "Well, you were handsome enough in those days! But, at least, tell me how it has all come about."

"I have nothing to tell that it would interest you to hear. About the past I am dumb. Things are, as you see, well and prosperous—thanks to God and my good sons."

"You have still the two?"

"Thanks to God again," she answered.

"What do they think? How much do they know?" he inquired, lowering his voice, and with a cunning twinkle in his eye.

"Nothing!" she answered, and a spasm as of some sharp pain contracted her face; "and nothing must they ever know. My dear sons are proud, honourable men, and can look the world straight in the face. If they knew"—she twined her fingers nervously together, and looked distractedly from side to side, adding with laboured breath—"if they knew they were the nameless sons of a husbandless mother—it would crush the best part of them. They would never forgive me their disgrace—and *I* should die of the shame of it."

Mr. Levison virtuously shook his head.

"It is a pity you have allowed them to grow up under false impressions—a straight path is always the best."

"May be," she answered, "but in my case I don't think so. I had a right to keep my own secret; it would have done them no good to know it—only harm; now there is no need that they should ever know. It has been hidden so long, there is no reason why it should come to light now." Catching his arm, gazing searchingly into his eyes, with a glow, almost an insane light, creeping into her own, she added, "You would not do it, Isaac Levison! It would take the malicious devilry of a fiend to disgrace a mother in the eyes of her own sons!"

"Oh, that's all right as far as I'm concerned," he replied carelessly; "but about this money—I'm afraid you must come out of your shell there. It would never do to let the matter slide; five thousand pounds are not to be laughed at!"

"Can any law *compel* me to come out of the dark where I buried my old self long years ago?"

"Well," he answered, speaking with slow deliberation, "I don't exactly know about that; but no living person has a right to report themselves dead."

"I don't report myself; I simply disappeared," she said shortly.

"It is about the same thing," he answered.

"But for the mere chance of your *prying* here, I should never have been found," she exclaimed fiercely.

"But it was to be. Chance or fate, I don't say which, led me here, and *you are found*. Watson's firm, our solicitors, have advertised for you, and I'm afraid I should be committing a legal error if I kept the secret of the finding."

"But you will keep it all the same," she answered, being animated by a new spirit now that the first shock was over. "No eyes but *yours* could have recognized in this faded, wrinkled face, the Bess Hollingsworth of those dead days! All the rest of the world who knew me then are dead now. And after twenty-seven years why should not *you* be mistaken? You have no proof that I am *I*—nothing but the testimony of your own eyes. If you dare to breathe one word that Bess Hollingsworth lives in *me*, I will swear you are a slanderer and a liar! and my son—my Reginald—shall thrash you within an inch of your life—and he'd do it well!" Mr. Levison was staggered by this unexpected outburst, and was for the moment dumb; while she continued, "Besides, who would believe your story after all these years, if *I*, who am the person most concerned—to whom this money is left—deny it? I say that money is not mine. I never was Elizabeth Hollingsworth. What then? It's my oath against yours, and the whole world would rise against the dastard who tried to throw mud upon a woman's good name in the sight of her own sons!"

"You needn't go off at that tearing rate!" he exclaimed angrily. "God knows I don't want to hurt you; I told you before, it was all right so far as I was concerned. It is only about the money that makes the difficulty. Surely you will never let such a large sum slip from your hands?"

"I have told you," she answered, "that I will never touch a penny of it. It is not mine. I will swear that it was never left to *me*. Get it for yourself, and keep it, for all I care."

"That's easily said—but even if you are inclined to be so recklessly generous I don't see how any one can get it without your help."

"You'll find out a way, no fear, where money is concerned," she said scornfully. "You will easily find some wretched creature who'll swear she is anybody or anything for a consideration, or you'll manage to get appointed trustee or something of that

sort! Take the matter of the money into your own hands. I have given up all claim to it. Say what you will, do what you will, I shall contradict nothing. I shall never assert myself. I wish to be as one dead in law as in fact. I will only ask one thing, viz., that you take the five thousand pounds as the price of your silence; never let my name pass your lips, and swear that you will never come—knowingly—within a mile of wherever I may be."

He seemed to be struck by some sudden remembrance.

"I hardly see how I can do that," he answered. "Seeing you so unexpectedly put everything else out of my mind for the moment. You forget that your son has proposed to marry my daughter. How about that bit of business?"

"That matter can settle itself," she rejoined; "it has nothing to do with this that is between our two selves. Do you agree to what *I* propose, that five thousand pounds for your silence now and for ever?"

"It is a great price for what will cost me nothing," he answered with a crafty smile. "I certainly will not refuse it; though remember it is easier to talk about 'getting' that five thousand pounds than to get it; but why will you take up this antagonistic position towards me? I only want to be friendly and arrange things pleasantly—and you treat me as though I were your worst enemy."

"As you are," she said interrupting him quickly, "and have always been. It was through your evil influence that I and my boys were sent adrift. Although it all happened so many years ago it is present to my mind as though it was only yesterday. I have kept my eyes and ears open for all this while, and I know all the strange things that have happened at Knaresborough. I know that you have got rid of everything and every one that stood in your way. You could not even let young Harold rest in the home of his fathers."

"That had nothing to do with *me*—I swear it had not," he exclaimed eagerly.

"I remember," she said reflectively, "what a frank high-spirited boy he was; you hated him then, and carried every boyish prank to his uncle's ears—and I believe you had a hand in sending him from his country—in the very prime of life—a disgraced, dis-honoured man!"

"I was forced into that unfortunate business," he said. "How-

ever unjust *you* may be, all the world knows with what regret I bore evidence against him."

"Well, he is coming back now, they say, to claim his title and his lands; you couldn't put *them* in your pocket, or there would not be much left for him! I wonder you are not afraid to meet him."

"Why should I be afraid?"

"*You* best know why. Perhaps some day the answer will come."

Mr. Levison did not wish the conversation to take a retrospective line; he preferred to "let sleeping dogs lie." This meeting with an old acquaintance had been so unexpected, so sudden, that he had not time to take a view of the position in all its bearings on the instant; there were so many points to be taken in all at once. One thing he realized, that he had better not make an enemy of Mrs. Kent; already she was inimical to him on account of old scores; it would not do to allow her to register any fresh grievances; so he decided to do, or swear to do, or say, anything she desired should be said or done. He made no answer to her observation "some day an answer will come," but he resorted to some remark on the strangeness of his advent there, wondered what it would bring about, and informed her of the fact, which she knew already, that he was staying at The Friars. It must strike her as odd, he added, that she and that portion of the family should be such near neighbours?

"I have nothing to do with my neighbours," she said sharply, closing that avenue of conversation. "Mrs. Blaine occupies The Friars; that name suggested nothing to me at first; and it is only lately I have known of their close connection with Sir Reginald. But I am not going to discuss them or their affairs with you. We have said all we've got to say, and—— Here is my son!" she exclaimed with a sudden change of accent. "This gentleman has been waiting to see you for a long time, Regy."

"The time has not seemed long to me, I've been in such pleasant company," he rejoined courteously.

"Ha! hear that, mother!" exclaimed Mr. Kent, who had burst into the room like a strong north-easter. "Compliments don't fly about our ears generally; but the old girl *is* good company when she likes. And so you got acquainted without my help, eh? Well, that's all right." He smiled pleasantly, as he

glanced from one to the other. "Come, I'm just wanting a little talk with you," he added, to Mr. Levison. "You can come and lunch with mother to-morrow. I'll come home early, and we'll have a stroll round the farm."

"I'm exceedingly sorry I can't have that pleasure," answered Mr. Levison suavely, "as to-morrow I leave The Friars and return to Knaresborough. I will say good-bye to Mrs. Kent at once."

The leave-taking was brief—good-bye quickly said, and the two old—*friends*, shall we say?—of thirty years ago parted without going through the usual ceremony of hand-shaking.

CHAPTER XII.

'WHOSE HEART WOULD IT BREAK?'

THE next morning, according to previous arrangement, Mr. Levison paid a visit to the factory, and spent several hours there, the master himself conducting him over the building and through the different workshops, pointing out to him and explaining such features as he considered would be most interesting to an intelligent mind.

The huge forges, with their fiery furnaces blazing and roaring, licking the air with their upleaping tongues of flame, flashing with fitful gleams on the faces of the swarthy giants who beat and hammered each weighty bar of iron as though it had been a woman's spindle, and all the several phases of the working of this gigantic concern, made a profound impression on Mr. Levison, which impression he was not slow to convey to the master, to his supreme gratification ; for while one man rejoices in the admiration aroused by his wife or children, and another delights to find the world recognizes the force of his genius, or fathoms and appreciates the depth of his intellect, Mr. Kent rejoiced when the importance of his favourite hobby, the source of his wealth and well-doing, was duly acknowledged ; every expression of admiration or wonder that fell from Mr. Levison's lips tickled his ears and delighted his heart ; for, somehow, the genial, simple-minded fellow—clever man of business though he was, yet child-like in some things—was " pleased with a rattle, tickled with a straw." When Ruth's father spoke he seemed vicariously to enjoy the sentiments of Ruth's self.

After going round and seeing all that was to be seen, they adjourned to the master's private room, were regaled with a champagne luncheon—for Mr. Kent treated Ruth's father to his best—and spent, for the present, a last jovial hour together, cementing their new-born friendship as strongly as the bottle is generally supposed to do.

Before they parted, Mr. Kent had promised to pay a visit to Knaresborough in the autumn. According to his original intention, Mr. Levison left The Friars on the afternoon of that day; before parting, he had a long conciliatory interview with his daughter, and represented to her the advantages she would gain by marrying Mr. Kent; he was more than ever anxious now for that to take place, for which he possibly had his own reason, which he told to no one; but he made no effort to compel Ruth's inclination in that direction; he used only the most persuasive measures, and dwelt on his fatherly anxiety for her well-being, his desire that she should be her own mistress, no longer holding a subordinate position in the home of others, who, however kind and amiable they were, might change—for nothing remained stationary, neither our affections nor our circumstances—and circumstances might arise any day which would necessitate Ruth's parting from the Blaines and leave her to drift on the current of life with no harbour of refuge when the days of her youth were over.

Very kindly and considerately he spoke to her now, with none of those unpleasant allusions which had irritated her on their last interview; for he remembered the fact, which he occasionally had the habit of forgetting, that she was long past the age to be ruled by parental will; she was now a woman, willing to listen to advice, but to be guided only by her own reason and affections. There was no ruffling of feathers on either side, and they parted with all the decorous affection that was possible between two such natures. Meanwhile he hugged the notion, which gave him unalloyed satisfaction, that he had formed a friendship with Mr. Kent that at least would keep the avenue to further and closer intimacy open; and who could tell whether that might lead them?

Mrs. Blaine was not sorry to be left alone with her family, for it was getting an anxious time with them all. It was nearly six weeks since Mr. Watson had written to Harold Thurlow, in

California, telling him of Sir Reginald's death, and impressing him (in case he should not realize the fact for himself) with the necessity of his immediate return to take possession of the title and estates.

They might expect news of him any day, and they were looking forward with all the eagerness of hope long deferred, which was the more painful and hard to bear, as they could not discuss their hopes and fears freely before the young people, to whom their anxiety and the cause thereof were equally unknown. Wherever there is a subject tabooed in the family circle it is sure to cause a feeling of uneasiness and restraint. It was so in this case. Dolly and Claire both had an unexpressed feeling that there was a crumple in the rose leaves somewhere, but it was only a vague feeling, not substantial enough for expression. Meanwhile, the young girls looked forward to the coming of uncle and father, in anticipation of all imaginary joys, which in Claire's case were mingled with affectionate and eager longing.

On the morning of the day when the six weeks had elapsed she rose early in the morning—long before any of the rest of the family were up—in a state of feverish excitement. She had not slept, but tossed and turned in her bed throughout the night, longing for morning, in fond anticipation of what the day would bring her. Again and again, through the long silent hours, she went through her first meeting with this beloved, long-expected father, laid her arms about his neck, her head upon his breast, and in fondest words poured out the love that had been subtly gathering in her heart for all these years. To her vivid imagination all was so real that even when her eyes were shut she could see the dark bearded face and feel his sweet caresses. It seemed as though he had sent his spiritual self on some swift current of electric air, in token that his own bodily self would follow soon.

Radiant with happy hopes, she wandered out into the garden and gathered a handful of flowers, humming softly to herself the while, now and then going to the breakfast-room window to see if any one was down. "How late they are," she thought, wondering how anybody *could* sleep on that day of days. At last they came down, each within a minute of the other, Auntie, Dolly, Grannie, Ruth and all. Claire was generally the lazy one of the family, and Dolly was loudest in her expressions of surprise at finding her down before them.

"Oh," she exclaimed, "it seems to me that I have been waiting hours and hours! I thought you were never coming down."

"We are not late," said Mrs. Blaine, glancing at the clock; "it is only just nine."

"You forget what day it is. It is six weeks—the American mail is due!" exclaimed Claire, and her eyes filled with happy April tears. The girls took it in turns to pour out the coffee; it was Claire's turn to-day, but her hand shook so that at the outset she spilt the coffee over the cloth, and was glad to let Dolly take her place.

"Threepence for the laundress!" exclaimed Dolly, "and don't you know it is unlucky to christen a clean cloth the first time of asking?"

"Is it really?" exclaimed Claire, with wide open eyes, and feeling as though a douche of cold water was pouring down her back.

"Dolly, why will you repeat vulgar superstitions?" exclaimed Mrs. Blaine; "you know I object to such nonsense. Don't mind her, Claire—nobody pays any attention to what Dolly says."

"I don't," she answered; "only when one is so very, very happy, one gets so easily cast down." A veil of reserve fell over Claire; she felt as though they, as though all her world, ought to reflect her feelings, and think and talk of nothing but *him*. She wondered how they, his *mother* and sister, could sit there and munch their toast and sip their coffee, and chat over the usual daily recurring topics, as though that day gave no greater promise than any other. It could not be that they were indifferent; the son and brother must be dear to them both—not so dear, of course, as he was to her; she was his child, and must naturally feel the most of love and longing. She had never found the breakfast to be such a long tedious meal; it seemed as though it would never come to an end. At last it was over, and the family went their several ways to commence the round of their daily occupations. Grannie went to take her usual promenade in the early morning sunshine; Dolly to practice, and Ruth as usual to attend to the household business; Mrs. Blaine remained in the breakfast-room, and took up the morning paper. Claire slipped her arm round her aunt's neck and whispered with coaxing inquiry:

"Auntie, dear—what do you think? We may hear to-day?"

"We *may*," she answered dubiously, "provided there has been no hitch in the matter, and our letters went straight to him and he answered by return of post."

"And if a letter could come—he might come! why not?" exclaimed Claire, looking with wistful eagerness into her aunt's face.

"Certainly he might; but I don't think it is at all likely that he will," replied Mrs. Blaine; "he must have many things, matters of business especially, to set in order before he can start on a journey of so many thousand miles. Consider the years he has been away, Claire. We must not expect too much, for, however anxious he may be to return, there are a hundred causes whereby his return may be delayed."

"But at least he can write—you think he'll write, auntie, unless something very extraordinary has happened—or, perhaps, he won't write at all—he may think of taking us by surprise?"

"I have no doubt we shall hear soon," said Mrs. Blaine, "but your impatient expectation makes the time seem longer than it really is."

"Every day seems like an age," exclaimed Claire. "I seem to have grown years and years older during the last six weeks."

"You will wear yourself out with this continual state of restless excitement," rejoined Mrs. Blaine; "you are looking thin and pale already; if you go on like this, when your father comes he will find a poor pale little ghost instead of my blooming Claire."

"But I shan't be pale when he comes," replied Claire; "the very sight of him will put colour into my cheeks as well as into my life; the very thought of him makes my heart beat. To think that I shall look into his eyes, hear his voice soon, and feel my father's arms round me! My own dear father! I wonder I have lived so long and so happily without the near hope of it." She leaned her head against her aunt's knees, as she added, somewhat dreamily, "Do you know, auntie dear, there seems to be a bridge that stretches away from to-day to those other days when I was a tiny child? His voice, that has seemed swallowed up in the long silence, and his face, that has faded and faded into a mere shadow, all come back to me as vividly now as it was then. I shut my eyes, and go over that bridge, and again hear his voice—his very words, the very last words he spoke to me—"Child, will you remember? you are so young.'"

"My dearest Claire," said Mrs. Blaine, in caressing tones, "your imagination lends such a will-o'-the-wisp sort of glow to your life! I wish you were less impressionable, and did not put your heart quite so much in passing things."

"I fancy we all put our hearts into that which makes us happiest," replied Claire, "and into what better thing could I put my heart than my dear father? He at least is not a passing thing."

"All things that are part of nature or human nature are passing things," said Mrs. Blaine, setting herself in the train of a moral lesson, but Claire interrupted her.

"Oh, of course all things are passing; one doesn't expect an eternity of anything in this world; but what miserable lives we should lead if in the sunshine we thought of the storms to come, or in smelling a rose felt the imaginary pricking of the thorns! At any rate, I hope papa will be with us a long time before *he* becomes a 'passing thing.'"

A spasm of pain for a moment crossed Mrs. Blaine's face, as she said, deprecatingly:

"I cannot bear to see you looking forward in such perfect faith that all will be well, Claire darling. Of course we should always hope for the best, but it is as well to prepare for the worst. If disappointment comes unexpectedly, it is always doubly hard to bear."

Claire's nerves were so highly strung she was in no mood to take any philosophical lesson to heart just then. There was a resentful feeling in her heart, because nobody seemed in sympathy with her. Dolly could not be induced to bring either seriousness or sentiment into the matter. She was even more flippant than usual, and when Claire was dwelling warmly, in tender anticipation, on her dreams of coming days Dolly came down in the most matter-of-fact way.

"Don't think so much about it, Claire. I'm sure my dear uncle will be very nice and all that; but your days may not be made up of unalloyed bliss. Suppose he does not turn out so obedient and docile as he ought to be? You know men are sometimes refractory, especially fathers. I've got on so well with only a mother so far that I should consider the importation of a father in the light of a foreign invasion, especially if he came from the wilds of California. You know, they smoke there like old

chimney-pots—you can smell them a mile off; and I know, as a fact, that they ride on ostriches, and sit with their feet on the mantelpiece, or on the top of a wardrobe, or——”

“Oh! hush,” exclaimed Claire, laying her hand on Dolly’s lips. “How fond you are of talking nonsense! If you had a father of your own you wouldn’t care where he put his feet!”

“Indeed, but I should,” interrupted Dolly; “I think there is a proper place for a man’s feet as well as for his body; but when people come from so far away, one can’t expect too much either in the way of manners or morals. You’ll have to put my uncle in training, Claire,” she added laughing, “and teach him to be a proper regulation father; of course it will come awkward to him at first, as he has had no experience, and we mustn’t expect too much from him at once.”

Before the last words had well left her lips Claire had run away in search of Ruth, and the two, who were close friends and allies, went for a morning stroll together. Ruth was always in sympathy where Harold Thurlowe was concerned; she was as reticent in her way as the rest of the family, and rarely spoke of the absentee except to Claire; but when those two got together and his name came up, which it generally did, they revelled in Ruth’s reminiscences. Again and again she had told Claire, and Claire was never tired of hearing, of how she wandered away from home, with a vague idea of supplementing the adventures of “Alice in Wonderland” following the rabbits to their homes, perhaps hearing them talk, for if the walrus talked to the carpenter, why shouldn’t the rabbits talk to her? And how she had lost herself and he found her—the tall handsome boy!—and took her home. The most trivial detail was of all-absorbing interest to Claire, and she attached no significance to the fact, which indeed she had never even observed, that Ruth’s reminiscences belonged all to her father’s youth, none to the days of his early manhood. It was enough for her that Ruth had known her father well, and could and would talk of him, while, if the truth must be told, Ruth looked forward to Harold Thurlowe’s coming home almost as eagerly as Claire herself, though she did not express her feelings so unreservedly, and in hers there was a leaven of doubt and dread and pain unknown to Claire.

That day and the next passed, but brought no word nor sign from the wanderer. In the early afternoon of the third day the

two girls were doing some little errands down in the village when it came on to rain ; it was but a slight summer shower, for a minute before the sun had been shining. They stood up for shelter in the doorway of the draper's shop ; they had waited there only a few minutes when the station fly drove past with a gentleman inside it.

"Did you see who that was ?" exclaimed Claire. "I think—I am almost *sure* it was Mr. Watson ! and see, it is turning up the lane going towards The Friars ! Never mind the rain, Dolly ; let us run home." Dolly looked dolefully up at the misty skies.

"Run," she repeated ; "we can't possibly run two miles through the rain, and it is coming down worse than ever."

"What a nuisance !" exclaimed Claire, tapping the ground impatiently with her foot. "If he had only looked this way he might have seen us ! But I can't wait here, and I don't mind the rain, Dolly—it can't hurt us. Come, let us run."

The rain came down heavier and heavier when they started homeward, but Claire's eagerness fairly swept Dolly away. They took short cuts, through the narrow lanes, across the wet fields, their flimsy parasols nominally protecting their head gear, Claire's impetuous haste hurrying Dolly into a run, so that it was in a tired, breathless condition, and well nigh drenched with rain, that they reached The Friars at last.

They were right in their conjecture ; the fly had contained Mr. Watson. He was in the library with the ladies, and the empty fly stood at the door. The girls hurried upstairs to change their wet garments before they could make their appearance below. Having done this, Claire, who was most deeply concerned, and ready first, rushed downstairs.

At the library door she paused, with one hand upon the handle, the other pressed against her heart ; it was beating so that she would hardly be able to speak. Why did she hesitate ? She had been so impatient a minute ago. After a moment's hesitation she turned the handle and went in. Mr. Watson and Mrs. Blaine stood by the window, their backs to the door, he with an open letter in his hand. Mrs. Thurlowe, looking greyer and grimmer than ever, sat in her easy chair, her hands clasped upon the elbows, leaning forward listening with an anxious eager face. As Claire for that one moment stood upon the threshold,

her aunt was speaking, and her words fell upon the girl's ears like the voice of doom, as she said emphatically :

"No, no—I cannot tell her—it would break her heart!"

"Can't tell who? what? and whose heart would it break—*mine?*" exclaimed Claire, realizing in a flash that there was some great sorrow due to her and no one else! She went slowly forward, looking from one to the other. They too looked in each other's faces, and seemed tongue-tied for the moment. With dismay and sorrow they looked on the girl's white face; all the sparkle and light had faded from it—she looked like the very ghost of her old self—all her vivid life had gone out like a lamp that had been extinguished. Terrified, trembling, she glanced from aunt to grandmother.

There was a dry huskiness in the old lawyer's voice as he said:

"Better tell her at once—we cannot keep it from her any longer—she must know now."

"Yes," she exclaimed dazedly, "I must know now; it is something about papa—is it that he is *dead?*" There was an anguish in her tone that cut to their hearts like a knife.

"No, no, darling, not dead," Mrs. Blaine hastened to say.

"Thank God for that!" exclaimed Claire with a relieved sigh.
"If he is alive and well nothing can matter much."

"Then he is both alive and well," said Mr. Watson.

"Then what is it?" she inquired again. "I know there is something dreadful to come—tell me at once. See: I am prepared—quite prepared—for anything now."

At a silent suggestion from Mrs. Blaine, Mr. Watson placed the open letter in Claire's outstretched hands.

(*To be continued.*)

LONDON SOCIETY.

MAY, 1892.

The Countess Pharamond.

(A SEQUEL TO "SHEBA.")

By "RITA,"

Author of "GRETCHEN," "THE LAIRD o' COCKPEN," "SHEBA," etc., etc

Book III.

CHAPTER II.

WHOLESMIE DISCIPLINE.

"IF I had only known you were here, Mr. Hill, I should have entertained you very differently," Mrs. Levison was saying. "But that is so like Sheba. Keeping you the whole afternoon in her writing-room and never saying a word about it. And she is such a dreadful housekeeper—not even any preserves to put on the table. I really feel quite ashamed."

"Oh, pray don't apologize, my dear Mrs. Levison," said Noel. "I assure you a cup of tea is all I ever take at this hour. As for housekeeping"—he glanced wonderingly at the pale, tired face opposite—"I should think your daughter must have enough to do with her work, to excuse any little deficiencies in that respect."

He was thinking Mrs. Levison might surely do that herself. It could not be a very onerous task for such a small household.

"Oh! Sheba's *work*," said her mother, with fine contempt. "Much account that is! Scribbling a lot of nonsense about love and quarrelling, and dying, and making up. That's what all novels are about. I never see any difference in them except the names of the characters. But the characters themselves, they're all alike, and all do the same things described in different words. I assure you," she added triumphantly, "that I was speaking to a literary man the other night, at a party given by some friends of mine—very wealthy people—and I told him my opinion, and he said I was perfectly right. He had never heard the subject discussed so clearly and sensibly before."

"A literary man at the Matthew Levys?" exclaimed Sheba.

"Well, he was a promoter of literature and had just started a new journal, *The Lady's . . . something or other—Oh, The Lady's Guide to Fashion*, that was it."

"But that is all about dressmaking!" said Sheba; "fashion-plates and dress patterns, and how to cut out your own gowns and jackets."

"Well—what of that?" said Mrs. Levison sharply. "It's literature, and it has to be edited, and the articles read, and the descriptions classified. I know that because this gentleman told me. And he said a good fashion magazine brought in thousands a year. Think of that. *Thousands!* I'm sure they're more useful and more sensible than novels."

"Very likely," said Noel Hill gravely; "but you would not call the caricatures in a comic journal art, Mrs. Levison, and there is the same slight difference between descriptions of dresses, and—character."

"Naturally you would side with Sheba," said Mrs. Levison; "you always did. But I wish you could drive some common-sense into her head. It is very hard on me in my poor state of health to have so much to attend to. I can't even get her to do my marketing on a Saturday morning. And I'm sure she needn't be too proud, for the rich people with whom I was staying made a point of seeing personally to their own housekeeping. I've known Mrs. Levy spend half an hour at the fishmonger's bargaining for a salmon, and she would often get a shilling taken off the original price."

"Oh, mother, don't quote those dreadful people and their mean ways," exclaimed Sheba impatiently. "You know I must devote my mornings to work. I've offered to do the Saturday marketing in the evening, but you won't allow me."

"I should think not indeed," scoffed Mrs. Levison. "I don't want all the refuse and leavings of the day for *my* Sunday table."

She spoke as if the keeping of that table was an elaborate and highly important ceremony.

Sheba sighed, remembering the eternal joint and badly cooked vegetables that usually furnished it. But since Mrs. Levison had seen Mrs. Matthew Levy bargaining for fish, cheapening fruit and vegetables, and combating the fancy prices of butchers on their own ground, she had established a similar form of housekeeping

and manfully struggled through the same duties once a week in virtuous imitation of so noble an example.

The servant was not to be trusted, on principle ; Mrs. Levison still maintaining her prejudices as to the unworthiness of that class of beings. Sheba was too foolish and would pay whatever price was asked. It therefore became a duty that the mistress of the household should perform these little offices at the sacrifice of much personal comfort. If Sheba had wished to relieve her of such cares she would not have permitted it. Noel Hill, not feeling an intense interest in the relative prices of beef and mutton, or the advantage of getting a penny a pound off the said price by judicious worrying, tried to change the subject by inquiring as to Mrs. Levison's health.

Sheba gave him a despairing look, but it was too late. He had called down an avalanche of description on his head of all the complaints, past, present and to come, that that worthy lady had undergone or expected to undergo.

It was always pleasant to Mrs. Levison to think that in spite of the long martyrdom she had borne, there was a future martyrdom that still *might* be her portion. The sufferings already endured formed a hopeful background for such prophecies, and she grew melancholy and almost pathetic as she talked on and on, while Noel Hill drank his lukewarm tea, and Sheba sat still and patient on her chair, listening to that wearisome stream of medical terms and minute personal descriptions in which the soul of the hypochondriac revels. How he pitied this unfortunate daughter ; how, looking back and remembering her lonely childhood, the unsympathetic surroundings of her youth, the sorrows of her dawning womanhood, he felt that scarcely could he have counselled patience or forbearance now.

The love and memory of childhood sanctify many of life's later troubles, but he knew only too well that in this girl's heart were no deep immovable roots, nothing that endeared such memory—nothing that awoke such love.

He looked at the saddened patience of her face and marvelled. No change he had imagined in her was so strange as this new, uncomplaining patience.

Mrs. Levison was quite unconscious that she was wearying her audience. Glibly and eloquently she continued her discourse, running up and down the gamut of professional phraseology—

picked up by judicious study of medical pamphlets, her favourite literature. She related the virtues or failures of all the various patent medicines she had tried, and ended by describing herself as a poor broken wreck.

Noel Hill murmured vague sympathy, and suggested that perhaps she had strayed a little too far into the tempting fields of the pharmacopoeia, and adopted a wider variety of remedies than were safe or advisable for a single constitution to experiment upon.

This idea, however, Mrs. Levison indignantly scouted. Doctors had advised this, and suggested that, and recommended the other, and she declined to hear anything in their disfavour.

"Mother has a great opinion of the medical profession," said Sheba at last. "She is always happy when one of its members is in attendance. I think myself they have done her more harm than good."

"You always say that when the bills for their services come in," snapped Mrs. Levison; "they can't afford to work for nothing any more than other people. I assure you, Mr. Hill," she added, turning to Noel, "it is entirely her fault that I have been reduced to doctoring myself. She says we can't afford the expense of a proper medical man, so if I die she will be to blame."

"But, dear mother," exclaimed the girl, "there is nothing the matter with you—really. Your general health is excellent, and if your liver gets out of order now and then it is only from want of exercise, and a pill soon puts you right. The last doctor used to call here every day," she added to Noel, "and his bill amounted to £40 in three months. I simply told mother that our joint income could not possibly support such an unnecessary expense."

"Now you see, Mr. Hill, how I am treated in my own house ; and I might as well have no daughter at all for all I see of Sheba. She is shut up in that little cupboard of a room scribbling from morning till night. No wonder she looks yellow and sickly. Not that she ever had anything of a complexion, you remember, even in Australia."

"Yes," said Noel, with a glance of unguarded tenderness at the mournful eyes that for a brief moment met his own. "I remember that very well. But there are better possessions even than complexions, Mrs. Levison."

"It is not as if her writing brought in anything, or did any good," continued Mrs. Levison. "I call it waste of time to spend every day of the year over an employment that doesn't bring in £100 at the year's end."

"I have made £200 this year, mother," said the girl gently.

"Oh, well, if you reckon up bills and things at six months' date . . . but they don't count. I mean actual money down, so much every month, or every three months."

"Would you like me to turn shop-girl, or governess, or telegraph clerk, and bring you my wages home weekly?" asked the girl.

Her lip took the old scornful curl—her face once again assumed that expression of cold contempt which her mother's opinions had been wont to rouse.

It woke a sense of uneasiness within Noel Hill, that sense of opposing elements which threaten collision at some imminent moment.

He tried to avert the danger, and broke fresh ground by inquiring for Dolly.

"She is very much improved," said Mrs. Levison, snapping at the bait; "so bright, and so pretty, and very accomplished. She comes into all her money when she is eighteen," she added with a sigh. "She is very good to me, and often comes over here to cheer me up. Indeed," and she glanced at the clock, "I half expect her this evening, Sheba. The Levys are going out to dinner, and she said she would come round here."

"Had we not better have the tea things removed then," suggested Sheba, rising from the table to ring the bell. "We are rather limited in accommodation," she added, turning to Noel Hill. "This room was called the drawing-room in the house agent's parlance, and my little three-foot square the dining-room. And there are three sleeping lofts and a bath-room upstairs—that is all."

"Yes; it is a miserable hole," exclaimed Mrs. Levison. "But Sheba hurried me into it whether I would or no. Indeed, the discomforts and privations of my life since I came to England, Mr. Hill, need all my Christian fortitude to sustain me."

"It is a comfort," said Sheba, "to remember how much worse they might have been but for that fortitude, and—Dolly."

"Oh! there she is, I believe," exclaimed Mrs. Levison, as a loud

ring resounded through the house. "Oh, pray don't go, Mr. Hill; you must see her. I'm sure you will be delighted with the change in her."

"The change in her! Good heavens! what are women made of?" murmured Noel to himself a few minutes later. If this was a change, it was assuredly not one for the better, according to a man's judgment.

A small over-dressed fashion-plate of a girl, who seemed to fill the tiny room and the tiny house with her own overbearing importance—a girl who talked, laughed, posed, moved for the sole purpose of showing herself off—a girl with none of the sweet homely fragrance of girlhood about her—a girl who repeated parrot-like the phrases and expressions that she heard from her elders, and chattered as noisily and foolishly as a little brook.

"Oh, I remember you quite well," she said to Noel Hill. "I remember the dinner party you came to at my father's, and how astonished you looked when you saw Sheba. But then she was decently dressed for once in her life."

Sheba laughed for the first time since Noel's arrival. "You would be sure to remember *that*," she said, "young as you were."

"Oh, I never forget anything," said Dolly, with a toss of her small fair head. She glanced mischievously at the young clergyman. "So you have come to England," she said. "Do you like it? I do. I shall be 'out' soon. I think one has better society here than in the colonies."

"Do you call Maida Vale 'society,' Dolly?" asked Sheba contemptuously.

"Oh, I shall get into a much better set than the Levys," said Dolly; "*ça va sans dire*. I mean to play my cards well, I assure you."

"You are quite right, my dear," said Mrs. Levison. "You have *finesse*, wit, and natural tact. You ought to take a place in society far beyond that of the Levys' friends—wealthy as they are."

"I shall engage a chaperon," continued Dolly. She fixed her eyes on Mrs. Levison with a cruel enjoyment of that lady's excitement at this announcement, and a keen pleasure in dashing the hopes it buoyed, to the ground. "A chaperon," she went on, "who has title and position, and will give me the *entrée* to the best houses. I see advertisements constantly in the *Morning*

Post and other fashionable papers, so I know such chaperons are to be had—though they're expensive."

"That," said Mrs. Levison sourly, "needn't concern you."

"Oh, no, and it don't," said the young lady complacently. "It is a thing worth paying for, especially if I made a good marriage, as of course I shall." Then she grew meditative. "I've always thought I should like to be called 'my lady,'" she observed.

"It is a noble ambition," said Sheba quietly.

"Oh, of course, you're nasty as usual," said Dolly. "She isn't a bit more amiable than she used to be, Mr. Hill, and worries poor mamma dreadfully. Of course you know she has written a book?"

"I only know what all the world knows," said Noel Hill; "that she is a very gifted and a very famous author."

Dolly burst out laughing. "Sheba famous!" she cried. "Oh, that is very funny. It really is. Just writing one book! Why, she didn't make twenty pounds out of it—did you, Sheba? Not enough to buy a gown at Russell and Allen's. Do you call that being famous?"

"It certainly had not occurred to me that there might be a fame whose only merit was its money value," said Noel contemptuously; "thank you for correcting me, Miss Dolly."

"Oh, I am a very practical person," said Dolly complacently. "I assure you I'm very wide-awake indeed. I read Sheba's book, of course. I thought it awful bosh. So dreadfully romantic and—and unreal, you know. Not a bit like life."

"Perhaps not like Maida Vale life," said Sheba quietly.

"I daresay she will do better by-and-by," said Mrs. Levison encouragingly.

"One can always hope for that," said Noel Hill, rising and taking up his hat in suppressed indignation.

Sheba went out with him to the door. He looked at her silently, as he held her hand in his firm close clasp. "My poor child," he said at last.

"*Don't*," she cried, with sudden passion, and all the quiet and the patience of her face were dashed aside, as it were, by an invisible hand. "I can bear anything but pity. Never seem to pity me. After all it is only discipline. You used to tell me I needed it, and that it was wholesome. You were right. I assure you I find it very—wholesome."

CHAPTER III.

A YOUNG TACTICIAN.

"MAMMA! Sheba! Here, where are you all?" ejaculated a small whirling mass of millinery, dashing into Mrs. Levison's drawing-room a week after Noel Hill's first visit there.

"Whatever has happened?" cried Sheba, entering the room with her hands covered with flour, and her sleeves tucked up above her elbows. She had been instructing the small maid-servant in the art of making tea-cakes.

"The matter! Where's mamma? I want her to hear it also. It's the most astonishing thing, really. You might use it in one of your books, Sheba, only you never *do* put anything like real life into them."

"Perhaps if you could explain the wonderful occurrence I might be wise enough to use it as material," suggested Sheba.

"Well, I can't wait for mamma. Listen. I was driving in the Park this afternoon with Aunt Rachel, and who should I see coming along in a magnificent carriage, and such liveries!—my! but—well, *guess*, Sheba."

The girl turned so deadly white that Dolly was frightened.

"Why do you look so scared?" she said. "It wouldn't matter to you *now*. It was your old friend Bessie—Bessie Saxton—who married the Frenchman. Don't you remember?"

"Yes—I remember," said Sheba faintly.

"What is there about Bessie to frighten you so?" asked Dolly, looking at her curiously. "I know that Count Pharamond wanted to marry *you*, and that there was a row at home, and you ran off and married the singer—so mamma told me—and then he died, or ran away from you, didn't he? . . . and you came back to us."

"Don't!" cried Sheba passionately. "I . . . I can't bear to hear you chatter in that heedless way. Go on with your news about Bessie. Did she see you? Is she much altered?"

"Altered? I should think so. She is *très grande dame*, as the French say. So beautifully dressed. And oh, such a lovely carriage. No, she didn't see me. I wish she had."

"Are you quite sure it was Bessie?" said Sheba faintly.

"Sure! Of course I'm sure. Why, the count was with her. He's got so fat and looks so old. But no one could mistake

him. Won't mamma be astonished when she hears it? Of course you'll call."

Sheba shuddered. "Certainly not," she said. "At least, I won't. Mother can do as she pleases."

"Mother generally does," mimicked Dolly, turning to look at her impudent little face in the glass; "and mother is pretty sure to renew acquaintance with the countess. If she calls, I'll get her to take me; she's sure to do that if I promise her the carriage."

Sheba looked for a moment at the dressed-up little figure, the pert face, the elaborately-arranged hair of her step-sister. "Dolly," she said impatiently, "I don't often ask a favour of you . . . I'm going to ask one now. Will you grant it?"

"Depends," said Dolly with a sharp glance. "Do you want money too? I gave mamma five pounds last week to pay for bonnets."

Sheba flushed. "No, I don't want money. I only wish to ask you to keep silent about this—meeting. It can't matter very much to you. Bessie never was very fond of you, and . . . Dolly, I would so much rather that mother didn't hear about her being in England."

• "How ridiculous you are," scoffed Dolly, looking at her with merciless scrutiny. "Why shouldn't I tell her? Indeed, for my own sake, I ought to. I want to know some titled people, and get out of the Jewish set. This is a golden opportunity. The countess must be rich, and I suppose she has two establishments, so I could have the benefit of being introduced to French society also. Not speak about it indeed! Why, I owe it to my own future interests to do so. I might never have such another chance."

Sheba looked at her hopelessly. The uselessness of speech or argument came home to her with a conviction born of long acquaintance with Dolly's selfishness and ambition.

A strange presentiment came over her in that moment . . . the shame and dread of meeting her girlhood's friend was burdened also with the fear that this meeting—however long she might evade it—was inevitable, and boded no good for either.

She was so absorbed in these thoughts that she forgot Dolly. That young lady had skipped over to the mirror, and having removed her hat, was occupied in re-arranging her hair.

"There!" she exclaimed at last, as she turned to Sheba. "That was the way Bessie had her hair done. So *chic*, isn't it? I took note of it directly, so as to show my maid Richards. And her bonnet . . . Oh, it was exquisite. Fancy the palest, *palest* green crêpe and two or three pink roses *thrown* on it. Not fixed stiffly, like Aunt Rachel's or your mother's, but looking almost as if they were growing there. And her hair looked brighter than it used to do. Altogether, she *was* good style, I can tell you; and I don't study the Park for nothing. . . . By the way, mamma said you were going to buy a new dress this week. Do let me go with you. You've such poor taste. It's such a pity. I often think you wouldn't be a bad-looking girl if you dressed yourself decently. But you never cared about fashion . . . Do you remember in Sydney, when you wouldn't wear a crinoline, and Toinette made all your frocks? . . . What was that she used to say? 'Mademoiselle, she need not to follow *la mode* . . . she has *l'air distingué*!' I wonder if she was right?"

She stood opposite her step-sister, surveying her with cold, critical eyes.

That tall, slight figure, in its simple black gown, had a something about it that she, with all her art and thought and study, could never copy, and never gain. It puzzled her now, as it had puzzled her in other days; and engendering dissatisfaction, made her also ill-humoured.

"I think you will be a dowdy always," she said with kindly candour. "But perhaps it suits you, especially if you are going to pose as a genius. Me"—with an airy frank gesture—"I would prefer to be like the Countess Bessie. By the way, what a pretty name for her. I shall tell her I invented it."

"What is a pretty name?" asked Mrs. Levison, entering at that moment.

"Oh, how are you, mamma? I was dying to see you. The pretty name was one I've given your old friend, Bessie Saxton. Fancy! I saw her to-day, driving in Hyde Park, with her husband."

"Saw Bessie Saxton!"

Mrs. Levison glanced at her daughter in a conscious, half-shamed manner. But Sheba's downcast eyes were unresponsive.

Dolly had spoken. It did not matter now. Her own pain or fears or shame were as nothing. She must only hide them in

the depths of her proud heart once more, and act as if they were not.

Dolly rattled on volubly, delighted at the importance of her news, and dilating fondly on the Parisian bonnet and toilette—*—très chic* (as she termed it)—of the countess. Mrs. Levison listened in envious wonder.

"And to think you might have been in her place, Sheba," she said at last. "A real countess, instead of living in a little hovel like this, and obliged to slave from morning till night for a paltry income that isn't half as much as she gives her maid."

Dolly laughed her little shrill laugh. "Sheba could never have been a great lady," she said; "she is such a noodle. She never seems to understand anything except books. Me—I know the world and its ways quite well already. I mean to go the pace when I'm married, I can tell you. I shall live in France, I think. They get much more fun out of life than we do. Aunt Rachel looks shocked when I tell her so, but of all strict goody-goody couples commend me to a Jewish husband and wife."

"Hush, Dolly, my dear," said Mrs. Levison rebukingly. "You really mustn't talk like that. It doesn't sound nice for a young girl."

"Phish!" scoffed Dolly, tilting her saucy nose. "It doesn't matter what I say *here*. Of course, I couldn't talk like that in society until I *was* married. Then——"

She closed her lips expressively, and made a little pirouette on the floor. Then she came coaxingly up to Mrs. Levison.

"You will come with me and call on the Countess Bessie, mamma, won't you?" she said. "Now say 'yes.' You must, or else I'll take Aunt Rachel, and you wouldn't like that. I'll have the carriage for you, and you can wear the new bonnet. You really look nearly as young as Bessie in it. That's the best of being so fair."

Mrs. Levison glanced complacently at her reflection. She liked to think that time stood still for her, and was as easily flattered as a child.

"I must consider about it, dear," she said. "I don't know if she . . . dear me, how funny it seems to think of Bessie being a countess . . . if she would care to see us."

"Well—but we can call first—and find out if she cares afterwards," said the worldly-wise Dolly, who always stuck to her point until she had gained it.

"True," said Mrs. Levison, glancing somewhat nervously at Sheba. "What do you say?" she asked her daughter. "Will you come with us? You were such very great friends once."

"If you have forgotten the way that that friendship was broken and ended," said Sheba coldly, "I have not. You and Dolly can do as you please, but I do not call on the Countess Pharamond."

Then she left the room.

Dolly tossed her fair head with immeasurable contempt.

"Isn't she absurd? Just as if things mattered that happened long ago."

"I have always wished that Providence had made you my daughter instead of that unfortunate Sheba," said Mrs. Levison with a deep sigh. "At least we have *some* ideas in common."

"Yes, we have," said Dolly with her little malicious grin. "And one of them is that we'll call on the countess together, eh, my good little pretty mamma? You know I like going out with you. You're so stylish, and so different to Aunt Rachel."

It was by speeches such as this that Dolly invariably gained her own ends, Mrs. Levison's memory being of that convenient sort that she could forget all the little stabs, insults, and indifference of her step-daughter at one time, if she only flattered and wheedled her at another.

Besides she really had a strong curiosity to see Bessie under these new auspices. She marvelled greatly at her appearance in London. How would she conduct an establishment, rule society, and carry the honours of her position?

She had a malicious desire to find her at fault in some or one detail, and the possibility of doing so lent additional charm to Dolly's persuasions. Little by little she yielded, though the fact of seeing Count Pharamond somewhat interfered with the pleasure this visit promised. Besides, by yielding to her step-daughter she made that young lady her debtor in the future, and established a claim for those trifling loans or gifts, which so materially assisted her private expenditure.

She seldom dared let Sheba know the actual price of a gown or a bonnet, but Dolly knew very well, and the shopping expeditions in which her soul delighted, were not unfrequently occasions for displaying her own importance and the advantages of heiresship.

It was arranged, therefore, that the proposed visit should be made in befitting style as soon as Dolly could ascertain the address of the countess.

"But there can be no difficulty about *that*," she said, as she finally took herself off, "for the Levys have all the society papers. They get them so as to be able to talk about titled people, or copy their dresses."

CHAPTER IV.

A GENEROUS PUBLISHER.

"SHEBA," said Mrs. Levison abruptly, as they sat at breakfast the next morning, "can you let me have some money? That wretched woman, Madame Filoselle, has written me a most impertinent letter, demanding a settlement of her account and refusing to execute any further orders until she is paid."

"I wonder you go to her," said Sheba. "She is dreadfully expensive, and she never fits you properly."

"She has a name," said Mrs. Levison, "and makes for all the best people."

"In Maida Vale—yes; but as they think taste is only to be reckoned by price I should not be led by them, if I were you."

"Indeed you are quite wrong. Filoselle makes for people in Belgrave Square, and Portland Place and—other fashionable neighbourhoods. I've seen the box-lids addressed to all sorts of titles. She puts them in her window."

"What—the titles?" asked Sheba.

"No—the box-lids. How very stupid you are, Sheba!"

"I suppose I am," said her daughter. "For I should consider that action alone stamped the woman as a vulgar impostor. What is easier than to get a few box-lids, and have grand names and addresses printed on them? They need not *necessarily* go to those addresses. But doubtless Filoselle knows her customers."

"Of course you abuse her because I deal there," whimpered Mrs. Levison, "and because Mrs. Levy introduced me. You never have any sympathy or consideration for me."

"What is the amount?" asked Sheba abruptly, taking up some letters that lay beside her plate.

"Twenty-five pounds would do," said her mother rather shame-facedly. "I—I have a little ready money of my own."

"Twenty-five pounds! Isn't that a rather heavy quarterly item out of three hundred a year?"

"I knew you would scold and abuse me—you always do. But I've been accustomed to be well dressed, and I—I can't forget it, although my position has altered." Mrs. Levison spoke in the injured, defensive tone of an accused person—a tone she had of late adopted.

Her daughter did not speak for some minutes. She was reading a letter that bore the Mixsonian address and signature—a letter which seemed to surprise her. "I suppose I shall have to go there—he says it is urgent," she remarked as she replaced the letter in its envelope. Then noting her mother's anxious expression she explained, "The publishers want to see me this morning. They say it is urgent. Perhaps there may be good news. If so, I will let you have the money, mother. My new book is nearly finished. I might ask for an advance of at least twenty pounds."

Mrs. Levison shook her head despondently. "I never look for good news where you are concerned, Sheba. You were born under an unlucky star, I am sure. Why, the very first time you ever sat at table you spilt the salt. I remember that quite well, for your poor father was so angry he sent you back to the nursery. And you always will walk under ladders in spite of all I've told you—and the very last time there was a new moon you saw it through glass. So for the next month, at all events, you will be unlucky."

"I'm thankful I am not superstitious," said Sheba as she rose from the table. "How can such absurd trifles affect one's destiny?"

"I don't know how they can, but they *do*," said Mrs. Levison. "Misfortunes fall upon some people as if they loved them. If you look back on your life, Sheba——"

"Oh, please don't say any more!" cried the girl hastily. "If I am to be unlucky—well, I shall be. That's enough of the subject. Now I must be off and see what Mixson wants. I promise you, mother," she added with a faint smile, "that I won't walk under any ladders on my way."

* * * *

There was buoyancy and exhilaration in the sweet spring air as the girl took her way to the now well-known offices. Even

the cramped streets and dismal architecture which make London one of the most unbeautiful of cities, took a little brightness under the clear sky and brilliant sunshine.

March was waning, though the young shoots had scarcely ventured forth on the blackened boughs of the elms, and hyacinths and crocuses were but just appearing in flower-beds and flower-girls' baskets.

Sheba walked to the Marble Arch, delighting in the unaccustomed exercise and the delicious coolness of the air. From there she took an omnibus to her destination, and was ushered into Mixson's office with something of the freshness and exhilaration of the spring morning in her glowing eyes and faintly-flushed cheeks.

"Why, what blooming rosebud is this?" exclaimed the great Mixson, whose frame was a little more portly, whose complexion a little more florid, than they had been a year before. "It does Pat Mixson's heart good to look at you, Miss Ormatroyd. Prompt as ever, I see—beauty and business—wonderful combination. Shame for beauty that it requires such a sordid and commonplace setting. I was thinking this dingy barracks needed a *ray* of sunlight, Miss Ormatroyd, when—you appeared. Ha! ha! excuse the joke—ray—Raye—not so bad for an old man. Ha, ha, ha!"

His loud laugh echoed through the office and woke appreciative smiles from the clerks. To Sheba it only brought the old sense of annoyance—the desire that this man would keep to matters connected with his business and hers, instead of wasting time in fulsome compliments and foolish witticisms.

"But, sit down—sit down," he went on when his mirth had exhausted itself. "I know you're a very impatient young lady, and of course you want to hear my reasons for sending for you. Jones," he added to his head clerk, "go into the other room till I ring."

The clerk obeyed, and the great man bent nearer to Sheba, fingering meanwhile a slip of paper on which was a row of figures. "Now, Miss Ormatroyd, to business. This is strictly confidential—a matter between you and myself; I've not mentioned it to the Firm at all."

As the Firm was solely and entirely Mixson, and he was only responsible to himself for his doings, this remark was doubtless

another of those peculiar jokes in which the great man loved to indulge when the cares of office became oppressive. "No," he went on with a rapid glance at Sheba, "I've not spoken of it to any one . . . You really must pardon me, my darling—only an old man's weakness, you know—but you do look more charming than ever this morning. Ah! there's nothing like the dew of youth sparkling in beauty's eyes, and melting on beauty's lips."

"Now pray, Mr. Mixson," began Sheba in a tone of real annoyance. "Let me beg of you to waive all nonsense of this sort. You know I hate it. Come straight to the point and let me hear what you want with me."

"Pat Mixson would need be a bold man to tell you *that*, my dear . . . But there, you needn't be cross. I'll try and forget I'm speaking to a pretty woman, though, indeed 'tis the most difficult thing for me to do. Well, to come to the point. I've been looking over the accounts of your book. Did you get the last statement, by the way?"

"Yes. I was rather——"

"Gratified? Of course—of course. It's quite an unparalleled experience in my knowledge for any young author to make a profit out of a first book."

"I was going to say—disappointed," said Sheba coldly. "The sale seemed so large in comparison with the profits—the author's profits, I mean."

"Seemed. . . . Perhaps so. The figures looked large on paper. But consider the expenses. I told you I'd spare nothing to bring you out *well*. Sure I've done that, Miss Ormatroyd. You've been advertised through the length and breadth of the land."

"I know that," said the young author. "I was going to say the advertisements seemed to have cost an immense sum. I would rather have had less spent on that item, and a little more in pocket."

"Ah now, Miss Ormatroyd," said the great man waggishly, "there steps in that adorable but feminine idea! Money . . . money to waste on bonnets and finery, when you might be laying the foundation-stone of a magnificent fortune! How many authors have ruined themselves by that failing! A sum in hand—and let the future go. It is well for you, young lady, that you've a friend like Pat Mixson to watch over your interests. You'll say so yourself some day."

He looked keenly at her from beneath his heavy eyebrows.

"Do you care very much for money?" he asked sharply.

"For myself—no," said Sheba, colouring. "But I have others—to consider."

"Ah . . . um. Yes. I see how the land lies. Well, perhaps I can help you even there."

He consulted his slip of paper, and for a moment seemed lost in abstruse mental calculations.

"We've paid you one cheque," he went on, "and there's another due very soon, which I propose giving you to-day, if you wish, instead of your waiting for the next statement. But I have a proposition to make to you first. The balance in your favour is £17 14s. 9d. Well, I want you to make over the copyright of the book to me in consideration of . . . say £25 paid down. It is a mere form. The value of copyright in a book after its first two editions is comparatively *nil*. But if I had an interest in it I might feel inclined to work up that book with a view to your future writings. That is to say, I spend the money on it *now*, that you may benefit in the future. Do you understand?"

"Yes," said Sheba quietly. "But I prefer to retain my interest in the copyright."

"Oh! Very well—then the matter is at an end. You are acting against your own interests, though; and you will find I am advising you for the best. Of course you will prefer waiting now till the half-yearly accounts are made up, and that will close our connection with this book. It is comparatively dead, and I shall not issue any further editions."

Sheba looked disconcerted. "Must I wait till June for that cheque?" she said.

The great Mixson noted the change in face and voice, and took advantage of it. "Of course," he said. "Business is business. You choose to treat my offer with contempt. I therefore relegate you to your own proper position again, and deal with you—not as a friend—but as a stranger."

Sheba thought of Filoselle's bill—of her mother's wrath and reproaches—and her resolution gave way. "Forgive me, Mr. Mixson. I'm sure you mean kindly, and I . . . I hope you would not take advantage of my inexperience."

"My dear young lady—when you speak like that you hurt Pat Mixson in his tenderest point. Take advantage . . . and of a

woman, too! Why, I'm the slave of your sex. They do what they wish with me. Offended! . . . God bless your sweet face! Not I! . . . Here, we'll say no more about it. I'll make it thirty pounds for copyright . . . and a cheque on the spot. I'll write it this moment . . . and you sign this form, and don't bother about it any more."

The thought of that bill—the idea of being able to go home and hand her mother the money—again swept away the girl's better judgment. Besides, she was very ignorant as yet of the ways of publishers.

Mixson drew out his cheque-book, and rapidly wrote out a cheque, at the same time summoning his head clerk as a witness to the transaction. Sheba felt a strange misgiving as she saw the document which denuded her of all further rights in her book; but her need was great, and the future looked hazy and uncertain.

She could not afford to wait, or afford to quarrel with the great man. She meekly signed as she was directed, and received the munificent sum of thirty pounds out of the pocket into which her book had already put hundreds.

The business finished, Mixson remembered an important engagement, and signified the interview was over. He made no more flowery speeches, or hinted delicate flatteries. He was too good a man of business to waste material when his end was gained. As the door closed on Sheba, he turned sharply to his clerk.

"Jones," he said, "where is that letter from Gibbons the dramatist that came yesterday?"

Jones rose from his place, and found the required missive pigeon-holed in a corner of the desk. He handed it to his master with a somewhat significant glance, remembering the transaction he had just witnessed.

Mixson took it, and ran his eyes hurriedly over the contents. Then he noted a few instructions on the back of the letter, and gave it to his clerk. "Write that out at once. 'Heron Raye' has no rights in this book. I will permit it to be dramatized on condition that I receive half the profits every time the piece is played. Title to be altered as he suggests."

The clerk took the letter and retired to his desk, and a few moments later the great Mixson went out to lunch.

"My eye! Isn't the gov'nor sharp?" then observed his chief clerk. "He's made a pot of money out of that new girl's book, and now this morning he got her to sell him the copyright for thirty pounds! Think of that. And it's going to be dramatized; so, if it succeeds, he'll net a nice little profit out of *that* transaction.

The clerks listened with bated breath. The ways of Mixson were not as the ways of common mortals. Was not the colossal edifice he had built up, a startling proof of enterprise and good management? Mixson knew that "Nothing succeeds like success," and had laid that trite and time-honoured maxim well to heart. He had determined to be successful, and he had been so; and, by the help of Providence, meant to go on being so, to the end of the chapter.

From the first, he had marked Sheba Ormatroyd as likely to be successful. He saw she had genius. *That* was undoubted. Even the critics allowed it, with that reluctance born of official importance, which, as all men know, *must* recognize no merit as superior to its own opinion. This great body of useful authorities had actually chirped forth unanimous praise of a book by an unknown author. It was not strictly unanimous, of course. The leading critic of the leading critical journal had discovered that the book was marred by a few botanical errors, which had as much relation to the plot, style, or character of the work as a fly might have to an elephant. However, he pinned his faith as to the worthlessness of the whole three volumes, on a trifling error discovered in the first.

Sheba learnt, later on, that this captious individual lived at Clapham, and prided himself on his skill as an amateur gardener. Naturally, no one would expect such a personage to be reconciled to the monstrous assertion that cucumbers grew without a frame, and that oleanders and roses bloomed in the same month. The fact of such eccentricities on the part of Nature being perpetrated in a land he had never visited, only made the disciple of horticulture more indignant and incredulous.

He put down "Heron Raye" as an ignoramus, and opined, in a series of sharply ironical paragraphs, that young ladies who elected to be known by ridiculous *noms de plume* and padded their volumes of sentimental irrationality with mistakes that would have shamed an uneducated market gardener, were not

the sort of beings to be encouraged to tread the thorny paths of literature. Having delivered himself of these opinions, the great critic turned to his garden-roller and his currant bushes, and smoked the pipe of peace in serene content till the next batch of books demanded his attention.

Sheba went home through the bright spring sunshine, light of heart and hopeful.

She must be getting on, surely, and she must be worth something, or Mixson would never have offered to buy the copyright of the book. Perhaps her next one would bring her in double as much. Poor girl! She forgot her contract and the terms that might bring hundreds to her publisher, while simply apportioning as her share the small sum fixed by that contract.

CHAPTER V.

A TRANSFORMATION.

"I HAVE found out her address, mamma!" cried Dolly eagerly, as she dashed into Mrs. Levison's presence a few days later. "It was in *Society Scandal*. She is staying in Grosvenor Street. They have taken a house for the season. When shall we call? Did you get a dress?"

"Yes," said Mrs. Levison. "I managed to pay Filoselle, and she is to send me one by to-night."

"What's it like? You might have taken me," pouted Dolly. "You never choose pretty gowns unless I'm with you."

"This is exquisite," said Mrs. Levison. "Peach-coloured silk covered with black lace. It was a copy of a Paris dress. She showed it me *privately*, as a great favour."

Mrs. Levison might have experienced a little surprise if she had known how many other customers of Madame Filoselle's had been favoured with a similar "private view." But that astute Parisienne, who originally hailed from Whitechapel, and had served a long and sharp apprenticeship to notable firms before establishing herself, knew her sex very well, and encouraged them with the *finesse* of a female Machiavelli.

"I hope I shall like it," said Dolly doubtfully. "It sounds all right—but then so do heaps of dresses when you *read* a description of them. It's when you see them made up you find out there's a want—a *je ne sais quoi*—which turns them into a deadly failure. But never mind about that now. Look here!

This is the paper. You'll find a description of Bessie's appearance at Lady Powderpuff's first 'At Home.' And then—see, this is the paragraph: 'We understand that the Count and Countess Pharamond have taken the town house of Lady St. Aubyn, in Grosvenor Street, for the season. The countess is one of the beauties of Parisian society, and is allied by her marriage to some of the oldest and most aristocratic families in France.' There!"

"And it might have been Sheba," sighed Mrs. Levison, as she took the society paper from her step-daughter's hand. "The idea of being so important a personage as to be noticed in a journal like this!"

"Oh, that's easy enough," said Dolly contemptuously. "Any one can get a paragraph in a society paper nowadays if they pay for it. Everybody wants to know what everybody else does, says, or wears. And the Smiths and the Joneses can get a notice just as easily as a duchess or a princess, if they write out what they want said, and inclose a cheque with it to the editor."

"This is a very levelling age," said Mrs. Levison. "When I was young, no paper *dared* say the personal things they do now—especially about the royalty and aristocracy of the country. I wonder it is allowed."

"It's very useful," said Dolly with a grin. "I like to know all about those people. I mean to get into their set some day, by hook or by crook, so I'm studying them and their doings now. I think it will come very easy then to follow their lead. Oh, how thankful I shall be when I'm out, and have done with those old owls of teachers, and can do just what I like!"

Mrs. Levison looked at her with that mingling of wonder and petulance which her audacious words and consummate self-importance not unfrequently aroused.

Her malicious precocity and her secondhand knowledge of worldly ways and worldly wickedness almost terrified her step-mother, to whom such things appeared far too improper for the outspoken interpretation which Dolly delighted in giving to them.

The girl herself did not fully comprehend the extent of what she said, or the inconceivable shamelessness to which the society gossipers alluded in their highly spiced paragraphs, but she pretended that she did so, and retailed the incidents of any

particular scandal with the zest of a club *blagueur*. The mild rebukes of her Aunt Rachel, and the shocked ejaculations of Mrs. Levison, or the mute disgust of Sheba, were all a delightful tribute to her knowledge of "this wicked world" and its ways.

She read bits from *Society Scandal* to her step-mother this morning, interlarding them with additions of her own, or private information she had received from friends of the Levys, who had proved useful in the matter of "accommodation" to needy aristocrats and ladies of the *haut monde*, whose diamonds were as far above reproach as their reputations—except to the "accommodating" gentry aforesaid.

When Dolly had exhausted her stock of information, she bound her step-mother down to a promise that the next afternoon should be that for the proposed visit, and then took her leave.

"I won't intrude on the dear old mole," she said as she shook out her lace flounces in the tiny hall. "I suppose she's burrowing into books and dictionaries as usual. Oh! how glad I am that I'm not a genius! By the way," she added, raising her shrill little voice so that it reached the pale student in her tiny room, "you can tell Sheba that I heard such a capital definition of genius the other day. It means 'a person who can do anything but make money.' Isn't it good? You tell her that. Tata! Now don't keep me waiting to-morrow, for I don't want to get out of the carriage. Sykes doesn't care about opening the door too often."

Then she ran off, leaving Mrs. Levison to the blissful anticipation of the peach-coloured dress, and the forthcoming ceremony which it was to grace.

* * * * *

It would be difficult to imagine a face of more blank and haughty astonishment than the face which the Countess Pharamond lifted from her book, as the door of her boudoir was thrown open and the names of "Mrs. and Miss Levison" announced by a gorgeous being in crimson plush and white silk stockings, who condescended to sit in the hall and receive the cards of the countess's fashionable friends.

The wonder passed into an expression of wrath and indignation as the door closed, and Bessie rose and slowly faced these two over-dressed and most unwelcome visitors.

" You are surprised to see us, I am sure, my dear Bessie," said Mrs. Levison gushingly. " I only learnt you were in England the other day, and I lost no time in coming to see you."

She took the reluctant hand, and her eyes wandered admiringly over the changed figure and its gorgeous surroundings. Dolly then burst in with an ecstatic and ardent greeting, and a shower of exclamations that covered her step-mother's embarrassment.

" I saw you driving in the Park the other day, and I made mamma promise to bring me. How happy I am to see you again . . . you dear, dear Bessie! Isn't it wonderful our all being in England? I came over to finish my education. Oh! of course, you don't know . . . I'm an heiress. Papa left me all his money. He always said he would. And next year I'm coming out."

" Oh, indeed . . . Yes, it is a surprise to see you," said the countess coldly, as she seated herself on the Louis Quinze couch, from which she had been aroused in this unwelcome fashion. " I am only in London for a few months," she added. " My home is in France, as perhaps you remember."

" Oh, yes—I remember very well," said Mrs. Levison, rather piqued by this chilling reception. " And how is your husband? I suppose you are very happy?"

Bessie did not flinch. She only smiled coldly, and said with serene indifference, " Oh, perfectly. Shall I let him know you are here?"

" Oh, not yet, please, Bessie," exclaimed Dolly eagerly; " I've such thousands of things to tell you—and I am so glad to see you. It's quite true what the papers said. You *are* beautiful. I don't wonder you were the rage in Paris."

" How do you know so much about me?" asked the countess, with a suspicious glance at the little animated fashion-plate before her.

" I read it in the society papers," said Dolly. She was not disconcerted or put out by the countess's *hauteur*. She ignored it altogether, maintaining, as one of her rules for social success, that it was always best *not* to see anything you did not wish to see. It saved so much unpleasantness.

Something of the old sense of wonder and amusement with which Bessie had been wont to regard this astute young person woke up again within her, as she looked at and listened to her now.

"Oh!" she said. "Do you read those things? I never do."

"Why?" asked Dolly, rather crestfallen. "That's the only way to get information about people."

"Perhaps it is for you," said Bessie, with languid contempt. "But when you *know* the people you don't require secondhand information, procured by bribing ladies' maids and footmen."

Dolly coloured. Bessie had changed—horribly, unaccountably. She could not understand these *grande-dame* airs—the cold smile, the haughty glances, the whole severe and chilling insolence which made up the manner of the countess. Evidently she was not pleased to see her old friends, nor desirous of renewing the intimacy between them.

Mrs. Levison here interposed with that fine tact for which she was famous.

"You hadn't always ladies' maids and footmen, Bessie, and glad enough you were in those days to accept *my* hospitality, and make my house your home. You seem to think yourself a very grand lady now, but I'd like to know what you'd have been but for me?"

A faint pink flush rose to the face of the Countess Pharamond.

"Your remarks are not in the best possible taste, Mrs. Levison," she said icily. "Please remember that *I* have not sought this interview, and that it may not be as pleasant to me as to *yourself*."

"Oh, do be quiet, mamma!" exclaimed Dolly angrily. "You'll spoil everything. Look here, Bessie," she went on coaxingly, "I assure you I thought you'd be as glad to see me as I was to see you. But if you're really so very grand now—and—and don't care about us any more—why—why——"

She broke off, and glanced appealingly at the fair, handsome face, set like a mask in its cold pride.

"I am not aware I ever did care about any of you—very much," said Bessie indifferently, "except Sheba, poor girl. But now that she is dead I really think——"

"Sheba *dead*!" exclaimed Dolly and her step-mother simultaneously.

"Who on earth told you that?" continued Mrs. Levison.

"I—I heard it—a short time ago," stammered Bessie, losing her self-control for a moment. "Isn't it true?"

"True?" Dolly's shrill laughter pealed through the room. "True? Gracious! I should think not. She's as much alive as you or I. What could have put such an idea into your head?"

The Countess Pharamond's face had grown very pale. The white hands fluttering the leaves of the book she held, trembled exceedingly.

"Then she is alive and with—you?" she asked, turning to Mrs. Levison.

"Yes," said that lady. "She came back to me after—after that unfortunate affair with the singer. The wretched man turned out to be married, and Sheba found it out—and—well, it is very distressing to a mother to speak on such a subject. I—I really cannot bear to hear it mentioned."

She put her handkerchief to her eyes. She did not see the strained, horrified gaze of the face before her. The Countess Pharamond seemed strangely disturbed by the news she had received.

"To think you shouldn't know!" chirped Dolly. "How funny! It was very dreadful—and when Sheba came back you wouldn't have known her. She looked like a ghost, and was so ill. But she's all right now; she's taken to writing books. We wanted her to come here to-day, but she wouldn't."

"Why?" The proud lips could scarcely frame the inquiry, they trembled so.

"Why? Oh, she'll never go anywhere. She mopes by herself, and scribbles from morning till night. Poor mamma hasn't a very lively time of it, I can tell you."

"Indeed, no," said Mrs. Levison, delighted to air her pet grievance. "But Sheba was never like a daughter to me. You remember that of old, Bessie?"

Still the countess sat there—pale, unable, so it seemed, to recover her lost composure.

"I—I should like to see her. I *must* see her," she said at last. "Mrs. Levison, forgive me if I seemed discourteous a moment ago. I—I was put out. I didn't mean it. You were right. One ought not to forget old friends—and Sheba was my earliest friend; we were like sisters once. Bring her here, or, stay, I will come and see her, soon—to-morrow, if that will suit you. May I?"

In her eagerness she rose, and the book she had held in her nervous grasp fell to the ground. Dolly picked it up.

"Why!" she exclaimed, "this is Sheba's book. How funny! That's the name she writes under—'Heron Raye.' Awfully silly, isn't it? But she won't be advised by me."

"*That*—her book!" Bessie took it from the girl, and the expression of her face was so strange that Mrs. Levison found herself studying it with a new sense of wonder, into which something like fear had crept.

"Yes, I suppose you are astonished. It's not up to much, and she's only made fifty pounds by it; but perhaps she'll do better some day. You were saying you would like to call on us. I—I really am almost ashamed to ask you to our poor dwelling. But things have changed since the old days. The wheel of fortune has gone round, and I am no longer what I used to be."

"It doesn't matter," said Bessie vaguely—"I mean I would not find any difference. I—I only want to see Sheba."

"Then come to-morrow," said Dolly quickly.

"I will," said the countess. "Tell her to expect me."

They took their leave then, wondering not a little at the extraordinary transformation rank and riches had made in the girl they remembered. They would have wondered more had they seen the change in the woman they had left. When the closing door had shut her into solitude, she took up the book—looking at it as if it were some noxious thing. "She has not forgotten—either," she muttered. "The woman who wrote this, wrote it with her very heart's blood. . . . Alive, gifted, famous. My God, how I *hate* her! What chance have I if they should meet now? How could he have lied to me? Or does he really believe she is dead? Oh, Paul! that you might think it always—always—always—if it could only bring you nearer to my longing heart!"

She flung the book far from her with a gesture of horror and disgust, and hid the wild passion of her face within her shuddering arms.

(*To be continued.*)

A Famous Lady of the Last Century.*

IN an interesting essay on the question, "How true history ought to be written," the celebrated Greek rhetorician Lucian passes upon an historical writer of his own age a critical judgment somewhat severe. The head and front of this scribe's offending was that in narrating a campaign of the Romans against the Parthians, he had devoted only a few lines to the great and terrible battle of Europus, while he had enlarged in the most undignified and trivial manner imaginable upon the adventures of one Mausacas, a Mausilanian trooper in the Roman army. The historian had narrated how Mausacas had fallen in with an Assyrian peasant of the neighbourhood who had travelled in Africa ; how cordially the said peasant had received him and had treated him to dinner ; how graphically he had described his wanderings among the elephants and the lions in the Sahara ; how he had landed at Cæsarea on his journey home, and how much the purchase of fish had cost him in the market place there. As a critic we have no doubt that Lucian in his strictures was correct. And yet so much does the relative interest of past events change as the world grows older, that now, after the lapse of two thousand rolling years, we do not hesitate to say that the most erudite classical scholar in Christendom would gladly exchange the minutest account of the battle of Europus that was ever penned, for a description of the personal appearance of the Assyrian peasant, of the various kinds of dishes which graced his table, of his wonderful experiences in darkest Africa, of the numbers of lions and elephants he met in the desert, not omitting even a little statistical information respecting the fish market at Cæsarea in the second century. Even so it is with regard to times ever so much later than these. How many bales of treaties and blue books would we not readily barter for a bundle of unpublished family letters, or a manuscript diary that had long lain hid. How gladly do we welcome the publication of a

* "Letters and Journals of Lady Mary Coke." Two vols. Privately printed by the Earl of Home.

budget of old-time correspondence, and what blessings we invoke upon the head of the Earl of Home for his goodness in printing, even though it be for the delectation of the select few, the letters and journals of his illustrious kinswoman, the celebrated Lady Mary Coke. There is a charm even in the bare title of these volumes. They constitute the "Open Sesame" to a world of pleasant things. Like the sound of the prompter's bell on the stage, the curtain rises and discloses a brilliant galaxy of wits, beauties, statesmen and men of pleasure, attired in the quaint and picturesque costume of the Georgian age. They have vanished from the busy scenes of this work-a-day world. They have been decently be-mourned. They have been reasonably forgotten. Let us in charity hope that after life's fitful fever they one and all sleep well.

Though Lady Coke's journals and letters contain much that relates only to politics and to diplomacy, they also contain the experiences of social life in various grades of English society and mingle with serious history the lighter chronicling of the airier things; or in other words, the manners of the men and women of a by-gone period. These for the most part have Lady Mary Coke for a central figure, and as she is by no means an unimportant one, we cannot do better than endeavour with the aid of these two volumes to give our readers some description of her.

She was the youngest daughter of John, Duke of Argyll and Greenwich, by his second wife, Jane Warburton, and was born on February 6, 1726. While still young her beauty gained her many admirers, although there was on the point considerable diversity of opinion. "Some allowed it, some denied it; the dissenters declaring her neither more nor less than a white cat—a creature to which her dead whiteness of skin, unshaded by eyebrows, and the fierceness of her eyes did give her a great resemblance." It is undeniable, however, that she possessed a tall commanding presence, beautiful teeth, a handsome neck, comely arms and hands, and to crown all an agreeable smile. Graces such as these, it must be allowed, cover a multitude of sins. Strict regard for veracity compels us to admit that Lady Mary was not altogether without spot and blemish. Undeniably clever, she was invariably wrong-headed. As her kinswoman Lady Louisa Stuart said of her many years after she had paid the debt of nature, "her understanding lay smothered under

so much pride, self-conceit, prejudice, obstinacy and violence of temper, that you knew not when to look for the cleverness, and seldom indeed did you catch such a distinct view of it as certified its existence." But having drawn these frailties of Lady Mary from their dread abode, we are bound to add that she possessed many sterling qualities, though these unfortunately were usually obscured like as the sky by a cloud. She was religious, she was sincere, she was perfectly honourable, she was good-natured when passion did not step in, she was even generous and charitable, though we fear we must add that her generosity was displayed principally in early life, and "before old age had sharpened economy into avarice." Considering the deplorable state of education in the eighteenth century, Lady Mary was well read and well informed. Unlike many ladies of high degree in this our day, her literary fare did not consist of every trashy novel supplied by the circulating library. Far from it. When we say that she was well versed in English history and state papers, that she esteemed very highly the poetry of Milton and of Pope, that she had studied the writings of Swift and Rapin, that she had swallowed large doses of Burnet and Burke, that she delighted in parliamentary journals, because she considered them the most authentic, that she was proficient in Rushworth's "Collections" and other works, the very sight of which would positively suffice to give many a damsel of the present day a fit of the blues, it may readily be inferred that Lady Mary's head was of no common order, and that he or she whose learning was "sadly to seek," would not have relished the prospect of sitting next to her at dinner or of making one of her party at the tea table.

When Old Father Time, "that subtle thief of youth," had reminded Lady Mary's parents of the fact that she was nineteen years of age, the friends and relatives of Lord Edward Coke, the only son of the Earl of Leicester, thought that it was high time to make overtures to her family for her hand. After much delay the bargain was struck. For Lady Mary's twenty thousand pounds, the equivalent was to be a jointure of two thousand five hundred pounds per annum, and five hundred pounds as pin money. But the Duchess of Argyll was averse to the union. Lord Coke was not exactly what we should term a "nice" young man, not, at any rate, in the usual acceptation of the term "nice." He was fond of the bottle. He hated regular hours. The number of

his "loves" was not represented by unity. In short, at the very time he was paying his addresses to Lady Mary, he was engaged as busily as he could be in sowing his wild oats. Cognizant of all this as Lady Mary was, she decided to accept him. She was not a person to be trifled with. When once she had made up her mind she was inflexible. The conveyancers proceeded to their work. Lord Coke was freely admitted to her presence. Yet in spite of this her ladyship manifested "all the outward and visible signs of a coyness approaching to aversion." Her lover dutifully took his place at her mother's tea table. He listened attentively to her long stories. He conversed most admirably on morality and propriety, keeping his countenance all the while. Every now and then he lowered his voice to its lowest tone, and tenderly addressed his lady love. But she, "bridling with ineffable disdain, turned away her head and hardly vouchsafed him an answer." Lord Coke bore this nonsense very good-humouredly, inwardly resolving to pay her out for it all when she became his own. Nor had he long to wait. With feigned reluctance the damsel at last consented to accompany her swain to the altar, where the marriage ceremony was duly performed.

Lady Mary Coke was married in April, 1747, and her marriage proved the reverse of a happy one, seeing that the ceremony was no sooner consummated than Lord Coke almost immediately renewed his former habits of gaming and drinking, lost no opportunity of attacking her father's memory, of ridiculing her mother, of disparaging the name of Campbell, and of slyly throwing out whatever else could irritate her most. "You will inquire how she bore such treatment. Why, her lawyers answered the question. They set forth that she ever comported herself in a courteous and obliging manner; she, they said (Lady Mary), being of 'a sober, modest, chaste and virtuous disposition,' which perforce reminds one of the meek spirit ascribed to Humphry Hoen's wife (Sarah, Duchess of Marlborough), in Arbuthnot's 'History of John Bull.' But we must remember that the said Lady Mary's teeth and claws were not already grown; besides, people who, like her, fairly love a grievance always support real evils better than those fabricated by their own imagination. As heroic sufferers they are in their proper element; it is exactly the character they aspire to exhibit, and so it inspires them with a sort of self-satisfaction calculated to produce apparent equa-

nimity."* Three months after their marriage, the young couple accompanied Lord and Lady Leicester to Holkham, where they were to pass the summer. It had been arranged that the family should travel together, and this led to an important discovery. When the driver of the Leicesters' coach and six drew up at Lord Coke's door early in the morning, Lady Mary was dressed and ready. Her lord, however, had not yet returned from the tavern. Then it was that Lord Leicester found that this was by no means an unusual occurrence, and fired with indignation that it should be so, Lord Leicester took Lady Mary's part in the warmest manner possible. That, of course, highly incensed the wayward Lord Coke. To be treated as a mere boy was far too much for him. He resolved to treat his wife with still greater disdain. The consequence was that after their visit had terminated, and the ill-assorted couple had returned to London, they lived upon worse terms than ever, "and in consequence of their declared quarrel she received a most flattering letter from his father at the commencement of the new year, extolling her as an angel and calling her husband a 'brute and beast' in express terms. The depraved wretch, who had proved himself unworthy of such a blessing as Heaven had granted him in her, should henceforth be renounced by him (Lord Leicester) and she (Lady Mary) regarded as his own beloved daughter married into another family."

Time rolled on. The breach continued to widen. Lady Mary vowed that she would never cohabit as wife with her lord. That vow she kept, with all her characteristic obstinacy. Seeing this, Lord Leicester, who before had been her friend, now became her enemy. Lady Mary being unwell went to reside for several months at her mother's house. Lord Coke, being also ill, resided with his parents, and often as he called to inquire after the state of her health, he was never admitted although other visitors were. Her nerves, she said, were far too weak to bear the agitation that an interview with her spouse would cause. In the meantime her uncle did all that he could to persuade Lord Leicester to let the miserable couple be formally separated. But the earl and his son both turned a deaf ear to the proposal. The couple went to Sunninghill, and from Sunninghill they

* *Journal* i., p. lxi.

went to Holkham, Lord Leicester's seat in Norfolk. There the earl and his son tried hard to tame the shrew. But the shrew was not to be tamed. For months she kept to her own apartment; refused, like Rachel to be comforted, and declined, in spite of the entreaties of her physician, to put foot outside the door. In March, 1749, Lord Coke absented himself. Before doing so, however, he empowered his father, by a letter of attorney, to take certain strong measures, which they had beforehand agreed upon between them. Lady Mary's maid was to be dismissed without warning. Her place was to be supplied by another of their own choice. Lady Mary was to be removed from the new house at Holkham into the adjoining old one. Strict orders were given to the domestics to deny access to any of her relations who attempted to visit her. For nearly six months Lady Mary lived in this state of persecution and imprisonment. She found means, however, notwithstanding, thanks to the servants, the apothecary and the chaplain, to correspond with her family. The Duchess of Argyll became furious, and at length, accompanied by a friend named Mackenzie and a solicitor, went to Holkham, and demanded, before witnesses, to have access to her daughter. Access was stoutly refused. Burning with anger the duchess returned to town, made affidavit of the fact, and obtained from the judges of the King's Bench a writ of *habeas corpus*, enjoining Lord Coke to produce his wife before them on the first day of term in November. November soon came. Lady Mary was brought up to London, swore the peace against her husband, and instituted a suit for divorce on the score of cruel usage. The Chief Justice declared that she was under the protection of the court in the interim, and ordered that her near relations, her lawyers and her physicians should be allowed unrestricted access to her presence. "I have often and often heard," says the Lady Louisa Stuart, "my mother describe the ceremony of Lady Mary's public appearance. The court was crowded to excess, the bench filled with ladies, for the duchess and her daughters not only assembled those related to them, but engaged all the most respectable of their acquaintance to countenance her by attending. Her male kindred and friends assisted likewise. On the other hand, Lord Leicester and his son, having no great interest with respectable women, gathered together a numerous posse of lively, clever, wild young men; all the rakes

and all the geniuses of the age came to back Lord Coke, or rather to enjoy an exhibition in their eyes very diverting. Lady Mary's faction found it far otherwise ; the poor old duchess was crying bitterly, Lady Strafford repeatedly fainting away, and my mother said she never saw a more moving scene in any tragedy. If one durst form such a surmise, perhaps it distressed her and the rest of the troop more than it really did the chief actress ; for I cannot but suspect that there was something in the dignity and solemnity of the transaction wonderfully consonant to Lady Mary's inclinations. However, she came forth, feeble, squallid, and in a wretched plight, dressed almost in tatters, which (by the way) the Leicesters maintained that it was her good pleasure to wear, since her pin money had never been withheld, and she had spent it as she thought proper. I should wrong you greatly by omitting one incident. The mob, which was prodigious, pressing to gain a sight of her, broke the glass of her sedan chair. 'Take care,' said the tender husband, as he handed her out of it. '*My dearest love ! Take care and do not hurt yourself !*'"

During the time that the suit was pending Lady Mary Coke fixed her abode in a garret of Lord Leicester's town house, declaring that her friends would provide her with no better accommodation. Lord Leicester and his son stoutly declared that her ladyship perversely preferred it to any other in order to make out that she was cruelly used. Day after day her friends and her solicitors mounted up to her retreat, notwithstanding its inconvenient height, to extort from her the information requisite for forming the base of their proceedings. A difficult task it was. "Never was any human creature treated as I have been," pathetically whined Lady Mary. "That we do not doubt, madam," responded the lawyers ; "but the law requires of us proof. We must go upon specific grounds. Will you please to enter into particulars?" "It is enough to say that in every respect my usage was most barbarous." "But how and in what precise respect ? Cannot your ladyship state some one act on some one day ?" "Oh ! a thousand acts every day." And so the conversation went on, ending in nothing. What the gentlemen of the long robe said to each other as they descended the staircase is not recorded, but it is not difficult to guess.

That Lord Coke had once struck her on the arm and had torn her lace ruffle—that Lord Leicester had once talked of sending

her to the hundreds of Essex or some place equally unwholesome—that Lord Coke, having once found her deep in the perusal of Locke's *Essay on the Human Understanding*, had told her that she could not understand a word of it, and had called her “an affected bitch”—that Lord Leicester had once told her that she was a piece of useless lumber, fit only to be locked up in a garret out of the way—these were the principal counts in the indictment or memorial which poor Lady Mary Coke addressed to the spiritual court. Well may Lady Louisa Stuart observe that “if the judges preserved their gravity on hearing it repeated, they did all that decency could demand of mortal men.” What did the stiff legal document prove? Nothing more than she had, in common parlance, “caught a tartar” for a husband, a matter of every-day experience in that age as in this.

The result was that the matter fell through, as it deserved to do. Lady Mary was left to the tender mercies of her enemies. If her spouse and his father had not felt tired of the game they were playing, Lady Mary would assuredly have had no alternative but to return to her prison, or to take the wings of the morning and to flee into the uttermost parts of the sea. Lord Hartington, afterwards Duke of Devonshire, came forward as the peacemaker. Yielding to his persuasions the Leicesters consented to allow Lady Mary Coke to reside unmolested at Sudbrook Park, in Surrey, on condition that she should withdraw her suit, bear all the expenses, never set her foot in town, and have no separate maintenance except her pin money. Hard as these terms were they were mild in comparison with those which they had at first dictated—namely, on no pretence to come within twenty miles of the capital, and publicly to acknowledge in open court that her grievances had been utterly groundless!

Who shall tell the relief which Lady Mary Coke experienced, some three years after she had separated from her husband, on learning that his excesses and debaucheries had been instrumental in providing him with a passport into that undiscovered country from whose bourne no traveller returns? Who indeed? Lord Coke's earthly existence terminated in 1753. His wife never married again. She wore mourning and forsook the amusements of the world for the usual space of time, and this “decent behaviour” did much to conciliate the Leicester family. But in secret everybody rejoiced at her deliverance. “At six and

twenty," says Lady Louisa Stuart, "she emerged from a very dull retirement, a state of constant humiliation and fear, into the perfect freedom of an independent widow, with a jointure of twenty-five hundred pounds a year, fully equivalent to what five thousand pounds would be at present." Before long rumours became current of her espousal. One set of gossips declared that a marriage was being arranged for her with young Jack Campbell of Mamore, the heir to the dukedom of Argyll. Another set of gossips declared that she was about to marry Lord March, the most notorious profligate and debauchee of the age, a man whose business was pleasure, whose passions were women, whose pastime was the turf, and who contrived to gratify each without impairing either his fortune or his constitution. He succeeded his cousin in the earldom of Queensberry in 1778, being then in his seventy-third year, and was for ever afterwards familiarly known as "Old Q." Few men of his day acquired greater notoriety, or were more an object of inquiry and speculation. Probably no man held in greater contempt the marriage tie. Nor can we doubt that if Lady Mary Coke had been so ill advised as to give her hand in marriage to him, polite society would have been scandalized and once more set by the ears. The real object of Lady Mary Coke, however, was to connect herself with the court, and this she eventually contrived to do, by means of an acquaintance with the Princess Amelia or Emily, George the Second's daughter, and that of the person her Royal Highness most disliked, the king's declared mistress, Lady Yarmouth, "a quiet, orderly, well-behaved, well-bred, honest German; long past her youth, and without the least pretension to wit or beauty." A close friendship which struck up between these two was terminated only by the death of George the Second and by Lady Yarmouth going abroad. When, or how, it originated does not precisely appear, but it is certain that a very strong intimacy soon sprang up between Lady Mary Coke and Edward Duke of York, an amiable young man, barely twenty years of age. Lady Mary, although twelve years his senior, looked graciously upon the stripling. She addressed the prince, we are told, "still more respectfully than Lord Orford; but tempered her respect with all the attractive smiles and graces which could make the handsome young man feel himself flattered by the handsome woman courtesying so particularly low to him. . . . Lady Mary, having a

reverend care of her reputation, kept upon high ground ; admitted his Royal Highness's visits but sparingly, and wholly avoided any suspicious familiarity. In consequence his letters abounded with complaints of the prudish strictness that holds him so far aloof, and inspires him with such awe that he hardly dares hazard the most innocent expressions for fear of being misunderstood, and giving her nicety needless alarm." The flirtation was productive of much amusement. The disparity of age, the haughty demeanour of Lady Coke, the pompous epistles of the duke, were very curious. At last the duke began to quiz Lady Mary, made light of her pomposity, " of the awful reserve and the distant encouragement held out by turns, and more than all, of her evident intention to become his wife." In these circumstances, it is not a little difficult to conceive how the gossips could ever have had the assurance to declare that the Duke of York and Lady Mary Coke were secretly married. They did do so, notwithstanding, and they were never more greatly deceived, seeing that the last letter Lady Mary ever received from the duke was dated Rome, 1764, and inscribed " Your affectionate friend Edward." A most matter-of-fact epistle it was. Sentiment found no place in it, and, as Lady Louisa ably remarks, " Any gentleman might have addressed it to any lady, young or old, or even to one of his own sex." The Duke of York died at Monaco in 1767. Lady Mary Coke on learning the sad news was very grieved, and there is reason to believe that her grief was also very sincere. The duke's body was brought to England, for interment in Westminster Abbey. The poor grief-stricken Lady Mary, as soon as the funeral obsequies had been performed, descended into the vault, attended by Colonel Morrison, groom of the duke's bedchamber, and, kneeling down, shed copious floods of tears beside the coffin. The fashionable world hearing of this scene laughed at it, and made many uncomplimentary remarks concerning it, which it was perhaps as well for her peace of mind that Lady Mary was not privileged to overhear. We may add that for several years her ladyship constantly repeated her visits to the duke's remains whenever the opening of the royal vault or the demise of a prince or princess gave her an opportunity of doing so ; but all her numerous friends and acquaintances were supposed to understand that the hallowed fane in which they rested was never to be named or alluded to in her presence.

Lady Louisa Stuart tells an amusing story of the first interview between the Princess Emily and Lady Mary Coke after the Duke of York's death. The former neither felt concern, nor was disposed to feign it. The latter, after pulling a face as long as a fiddle, burst into tears. "Dear Lady Mary," said the princess wickedly, "do not make yourself so miserable *about my sister*"—her sister the Landgravine of Hesse-Cassel was then seriously indisposed—"I assure you my accounts of her are quite satisfactory." At this point the tears flowed faster than ever. "Nay, but surely you may trust me; I am not in the least uneasy now. By yesterday's post I received a letter from herself to say how fast she was recovering." But Lady Mary was dead to all these broad hints, and sobbed forth the name of the dear departed. "My good Lady Mary," burst forth the princess, "if you did but know what a joke he always used to make of you, I promise you you would soon have done crying for him." Lady Mary did not like that speech at all, and in order to show her what his sentiments had really been, sent her all his notes and letters. Back they came not long afterwards with a note remarkable for its brevity: "*I thank you for the letters, which I return, and wish I could prevail on you to burn them all.—Amelia.*"

The years sped on. A new generation sprang up which was stubborn and rebellious. All Lady Mary's old-fashioned notions were shaken to their very foundations by two events in high life—the marriages of the Dukes of Cumberland and Gloucester with plebeians. Present-day folk can form but a very faint conception of the shock that Lady Mary must have experienced. She, a real lady of high degree, a lady having the blood of Campbell flowing in her veins, a Dowager Duchess of York, at the least in her own opinion, if not in that of her friends, to be passed over as if she never existed; and to behold the illegitimate daughter of a baronet, by a mistress who if report spoke truly had been taken from the top of a dust cart, step into the proud position of Duchess of Gloucester; and to behold the widow Horton, whose father, Simon Luttrell, had been the greatest reprobate in England, step into the equally proud position of Duchess of Cumberland, it was really too dreadful! We wonder how Lady Mary could ever have survived it. Some consolation was perhaps afforded her by the thought that the king was so highly incensed at the conduct of his brothers as to forbid them to come into his

presence, and publicly to notify that all who frequented their courts would be refused admittance to Saint James's.

We can well imagine that a country in which such iniquities could be perpetrated, much less tolerated, soon became odious in the eyes of Lady Mary. She sighed for some land of pure delight, where saints and angels reigned. Shaking off the dust of English soil from her feet, she embarked for the Continent, inwardly flattering herself, no doubt, that a lady who possessed so strict a regard for the proprieties of social life would not fail to be received with open arms at every court she visited. Alas! never was woman more cruelly deceived in this respect than Lady Mary Coke.

Reaching Berlin, in order to pay her respects to Frederick of Prussia, she was much mortified to find that august personage of set purpose, not only invisible, but inaccessible. At Vienna she met with a slightly better reception. The British envoy, Sir Robert Murray Keith, introduced her to the Emperor Joseph and the Empress, and to all the notabilities of the court. Her stay was a delightful one, so delightful indeed that she felt many a pang at parting. From Vienna she went to Tyrol, and from Tyrol into Italy, where she met with a very cold reception. Then she made up her mind to visit the court of France. But the young king and queen accorded hardly any welcome worthy of the name to Lady Mary at Versailles. "In those days one of the unfortunate Queen Mary Antoinette's chief sins appears to have been a want of attention to that resentful part of the creation, old women, and consequent disregard of all the forms, etiquettes, decorums, and such observances which old women value and recommend—not always unwisely as her melancholy history may prove."

Heartily sick of visiting the courts of Europe, and firmly convinced that they were all degenerate, Lady Mary sought once more the land of her birth, not, however, without having first caused a breach between herself and Horace Walpole at Paris. Lady Mary Coke never went abroad again. She fixed her abode in London, where sad it is to relate that it became her lot "to stoop from braving the enmity of empresses and queens, and to live to dread the revenge of John and Betty, leagued with an atrocious cheesemonger," a state of affairs over which we willingly draw a veil.

Her domestics were always quitting her service, and it is not

surprising that they did, since we are told that they were a set of ragamuffins who for want of a character could get no other place. To one, however, named Claire, a handsome female mulatto from the French West Indies, Lady Mary Coke became much attached. This attachment the cunning slave repaid by frequently stopping out rather late in the evening "to see a sick friend," and being "suddenly sent for by a San Domingo cousin," so often that it became at last a standing joke with the watchmen of Berkeley Square. We may mention that after quitting Lady Mary's service, this mulatto was lost sight of for fifteen years. At the expiration of that period she appeared as the favourite sultana of Sir Henry Englefield! An interminable war with the domestics, who kept their mistress in constant alarm for her throat and her casket of jewels, a keen interest in the affairs of the nation, about the government of which she took more trouble than the cabinet council, and an even keener interest in all that related to the fashionable world, we may be perfectly sure that Lady Mary Coke did not find the time hang very heavily on her hands ; but in the meantime much was happening. Old fashions were changing, yielding place to new ones. This naturally caused her much vexation of spirit. In spite of protests, arguments and harangues, the wearing of sacques, hoops, and all the other parts of ladies' attire, were one after the other laid aside. All these signs of change reminded Lady Mary that she was no longer youthful, and contributed greatly to sour a temper at the best by no means a sweet one.

Things went on from bad to worse, till at length, in 1781, she quarrelled with the Princess Amelia, her oldest friend, and as the incident is described so admirably by Lady Louisa Stuart, we shall make no apology for quoting it in its entirety :

"Lady Mary sate down to cards one evening in a mood of superlative perverseness ; sought occasions to squabble, found fault with the princess's play, laughed her assertions to scorn, and finally got a very sharp reply for her pains. In lieu of recollecting herself, she took fire, and retorted more sharply still. The princess declined further altercation, with an air that said, 'I remember who I am,' and the company gazed at each other in silence. When the party broke up, Lady Mary departed unspoken to, and all concluded that she would be admitted into that house no more. But Princess Emily gave her fairer play than

they expected. She desired to see her alone, and calmly entered upon a good-humoured expostulation. ‘We are such old friends,’ said she, ‘that it really is too foolish to fall out and part about a trifle ; but you must be conscious you were very provoking the other night. As I lost my temper too, I am the readier to forgive ; only say you are sorry, and I will never think of it again.’ Here was a noble opportunity to display unyielding firmness of character. Lady Mary drew herself up to her utmost height, and answered with all the dignity of Charles the First at his trial, or Algernon Sidney confronting Judge Jeffreys : ‘Madam, I respect your Royal Highness as I ought ; my loyalty to your illustrious house has been sufficiently proved ; my attachment to your person is beyond dispute ; but I cannot give up my integrity and honour. I cannot retract the opinions I have once delivered, while I continue persuaded they are just. Your Royal Highness yourself would be entitled to despise me did I act so meanly. I am no sycophant—no flatterer ; adulation will never flow from me.’ ‘Pooh ! pshaw ! nonsense !’ cried the princess, interrupting her. ‘Where’s the use of all these heroics about nothing ? Who wants you to retract, and flatter, and I know not what ? Can’t you say, as I say myself, that you are concerned for this very silly business, and so let us be friends ?’ ‘No, madam, my honour—honour, which is dearer to me than life—’ and then followed another tirade. After one or two more vain endeavours to bring her down from her stilts, the other rose to *her* full height likewise, and assuming all the king’s daughter, ‘Well, madam,’ she said, ‘your ladyship knows your own pleasure best. I wish you health and happiness for the future, and at present a good morning. Here,’ to the page in waiting, ‘order Lady Mary Coke’s carriage,’ then gravely bowing in token of dismissal, turned away. From that moment they never met again. The loss was altogether Lady Mary’s, and also the mortification. This she betrayed by a constant fidgeting anxiety to know whatever passed at Princess Emily’s parties, who came and who went, and what her Royal Highness said or did. The princess survived their final rupture but two or three years.”

Concerning the closing years of Lady Mary’s earthly existence little remains to be told. When “the First Gentleman in Europe,” whom she had known from an infant, came to man’s estate, his behaviour occupied much of her attention, and that his vagaries

and gallantries were viewed by her with a favourable eye it would be going too far to suppose. Nor is it surprising to learn that when the Heir-Apparent bestowed his affections upon Mrs. Fitzherbert, "it went near to wake the old Gloucester and Cumberland fever rage in her veins anew." Other important events tried her equanimity sorely. The animated debates on the regency question, the influence which the French Revolution exerted on the lower orders of English society, the utter contempt with which the democracy treated crowns, thrones and coronets, filled her with alarm. But she was now considered "an extinct volcano," and her ebullitions of wrath attracted the attention of none.

The eighteenth century rolled away, the nineteenth century dawned, and still Lady Mary Coke tarried in the land of the living. But the end was not far off, and early on the morning of September 30th, 1811, the solemn tones of the bell of Chiswick church proclaimed to the world that her spirit had passed away into that rest which it had never known upon earth. Like Sir Condry Rackrent in Miss Edgeworth's romance, Lady Mary Coke had survived her own wake, and had been permitted to overhear the calm, dispassionate judgment of posterity. In that great temple of silence and reconciliation, where the enmities of twenty generations lie buried, where every footfall wakes the voice of ages, and where, more than forty years previously, all that was mortal of the Duke of York had been laid to rest, it was very meet and right that the bones of so illustrious a personage as Lady Mary Coke should be permitted to mingle with their parent earth, and so in the Argyll vault in Henry the Seventh's chapel in Westminster Abbey, among a long line of illustrious ancestors, her body was buried in peace.

It is now high time to turn to Lady Mary's journal, and in so doing let us say that its value is vastly enhanced by an admirable introduction from the pen of Lady Louisa Stuart, daughter of the Earl of Bute, minister of George the Third. It was written for the purpose of giving to Lady Scott an account of her grandfather John, Duke of Argyll, in 1827 at Ditton Park. Lady Louisa was born in 1757, and died unmarried in 1851 in Gloucester Place at the ripe old age of ninety-four. Unfortunately, though constantly engaged in writing throughout her long life, the greater part of her papers were destroyed by her own directions. We are thankful for what we have. Lady Louisa,

we are sure, must have been a most accomplished and amiable woman, and to have enjoyed the privilege of her acquaintance must have been a liberal education. It is evident that she possessed a true genius for narration, a quality which will always stand first among literary gifts, and we cannot doubt that had her recollections of her times been published, they would have entitled her to the highest rank in the world of letters.

After Lady Mary Coke had separated from her husband, she resided with her mother chiefly at Sudbrook, near Richmond, in Surrey. Her journal, which was written in the form of a weekly or semi-weekly letter, and addressed, sometimes to Lady Dalkeith, but more frequently to Lady Strafford, was commenced on August 18th, 1766, and was continued till 1791. It is, in effect, a private news letter, and does not seem to have been composed with a view to future publication. We shall now make some excerpts. Under date of August 25th, 1766, we catch a glimpse of the childhood of the Prince of Wales, afterwards George the Fourth: "Before ten o'clock, dressed myself, intending to call on Lady Charlotte Finch,* at Kew, before I went to Gunnersbury.† Set out at once, found Lady Charlotte at home, and the Prince of Wales and his brothers going to dinner; he desired me to sit by the table, but said he did not like his dinner, as it was not his meat day; when it was over he made me go upstairs and play with him, till it grew so late I told H.R.H. I must go. He asked me where I was going to; I said to his aunt, the Princess Amelia. He then looked at me and said, 'Pray, are you well enough dress'd to visit her?' I told him I hoped she wou'd think so; he then order'd my servants to be called & said he wou'd go downstairs with me; stopped me again in the hall & in a low voice asked me if it was Princess Amelia's *meat* day. I can assure you he is the most comical child I ever saw." We may mention that the Prince of Wales was born in August, 1762, and consequently at this time was only four years of age. Lady Mary at this time saw much of Horace Walpole. Thursday, June 4th, 1766, she writes, "I dress'd myself for the whole day before breakfast, as he *was* to go at eleven o'clock to Strawberry Hill. Mr. Mackenzie did not go; I carried Mrs. Yonge, and Ly. Betty went by herself. When we came to Richmond ferry, the

*Governess of the royal children. †Princess Amelia's country house.

ladies wou'd go in a little boat ; I accompanied them out of complaisance, for you well know I have no fears. Strawberry Hill looked in great beauty, but Mr. Walpole was not well, complain'd of pains all over him, & was to go to town in the evening ; while we was there he received a note from his neighbour, Mrs. Clive,* to invite him to dine with her to-morrow upon a haunch of venison. He has a bullfinch that whistles an entire tune without stopping, and beginning again, two or three times over, like yours. Don't be displeased, for yours are certainly not so clever." Complaints are frequently expressed nowadays by regular church-goers, of the mumbling by the clergy both of the liturgy and the sermon. People were accustomed to this sort of thing, it seems, in the days of George the Third, for says Lady Mary, under date of Sunday, September 7th, 1766, "At eleven we went to church. The clergyman spoke so low, we did not hear above one word in ten ; the length of his sermon was very reasonable, but what the doctrine was I can't tell you." In those days too, people hesitated to stir a mile from their doors after dark through fear of being robbed and even murdered, therefore we are not surprised to find it chronicled that on one occasion "Madame de Welderen came from London & returned at half an hour past nine o'clock, tho' there are robberies every night."

In October, 1766, Lady Mary Coke went to Bath, and her gossip of that gossiping place, of course, fills many pages of her journal. Here is an account of the way in which she passed the first Sunday in the month of November : "Got up about nine o'clock. At half an hour after went to the Abbey Church, & heard a very good Sermon preached for the benefit of the Charity Children of that Corporation. Gave half a guinea as I went out, and walked to Mrs. Granville's, where I stay'd an hour, then came home and dress'd, being to return my visits. The Duchess of Bedford sent me word She wou'd come to me at seven o'clock ; order'd my Chair in consequence at half an hour after five, that I might be back in time ; found only Lady Trevor at home. She told me She heard there was going to be made four barr" [sic, in MS. Lady Mary was probably doubtful as to how many r's there were in the word "baronet."] "I then return'd home, & the Duke & Duchess of Bedford came to me & staid till a little

* The celebrated actress.

after eight. When they were gone I set out again to make visits, & ended with Lady Rockingham ; She had been so good to be with me again on Saturday Night. She seems, I think, to be perfectly well, & has never look'd in such beauty since the first year of her Marriage. She had three birds which She had purchased since She had been at Bath. She told me she always found herself more at home with a bird in her room, so She had brought three. I staid with her till within a quarter of ten, came home & sat with the General till near eleven but eat nothing."

Deep as was the interest that Lady Mary Coke took in the fashionable world, it had not the effect of shutting up her compassion from the desolate and the oppressed, or from providing for the sick and needy in their affliction. Several passages in the journal show that Lady Mary Coke in this respect was possessed of a large heart and of a most generous disposition. Much faith was, in that age, placed in dreams. Lord Drumlanrig, eldest son of the Duke and Duchess of Queensberry, was killed by the discharge of his pistol in 1754, a few months after his marriage with Lady Elizabeth Hope. Curiously enough Lady Mary Coke had dreamed of the occurrence long before it came to pass. In February, 1767, she happened to be visiting Lady Aylesbury. "After supper," she says, "the conversation turn'd upon dreams. All agreed it was a weakness to give too much attention to them, & yet it was acknowledged that many people had dreamp't events that afterwards had been very exactly verified. Ly. Ailesbury said She had heard of my having dreamp't of the melancholy event that had happen'd in the Duke of Queensberry's family a little time before it happened, which I related to several people the next morning. I said it was very true, & that I had had several other dreams that had proved as true. We all agreed to tell the dreams we shou'd have that night the next time we mett."

As in those times scarcely any one could be found who was not occasionally intoxicated, and when the inability of a gentleman to consume two or even three bottles of wine at a single sitting brought him into contempt, we are not surprised to learn that one evening in 1767, while Lady Mary was at the opera, "Ld. Barrymore came in quite drunk & behaved in a very extraordinary manner." We are not exaggerating when we say that there is scarcely a single page of Lady Coke's journal which does not

bear its testimony to the fierceness with which the mania for gambling raged among polite society in England during the first half of the reign of George the Third. No matter where the journal is opened the eye is certain to rest upon a notification of some sum of money lost or won at cards. Under date of Tuesday, June 2, 1767, we read : "At eight I went to Lady Holdernesse . . . Four rooms were open but not many people ; three tables however at Lu, & I won four & forty guineas." A few days later Lady Mary made one of Mrs. Pitt's party at Kensington, where she lost ten guineas at loo. At the Duchess of Norfolk's, at Hammersmith, not many days later, she lost three guineas. "In the evening I went to the Duchess of Grafton, where there was to be two tables at Lu. It began late. The Duchess and I sat by ourselves till half an hour after nine. Lady Jane Scott won near sixty guineas. My fortune was more moderate : I won four guineas and a half."

Lady Mary Coke was very fastidious in the matter of diet, and ability to set before her a dainty dish was a sure passport to her good graces. Woe unto them who did not do so ! Lady Blandford once gave her deep offence by the dinner she served. The company arrived shortly after three. "I never saw her have a worse dinner," wrote Lady Mary the next day ; "a great round of boiled beef, little mutton pyes, & two other little things not meat. You know I am not difficult, & yet I was at a loss to make my dinner. Boiled beef is a good thing, but a dish I seldom eat, & little mutton pyes are too savory for me ; beans I hate, & mackerel without fennel sauce I can't eat ; judge then if I made a good dinner. In the evening She made me take a walk with her in the garden ; her chief purpose seem'd to be to advise me to marry. She said people had first, second, & third springs, & that if I did not marry soon well, She was sure I shou'd marry in the end ill. I ask'd her why she thought so ; she reply'd with some quickness, because I might do a silly thing as well as other people. I told her I had as yet given her no reason to think so, but her answer was, She depended upon nobody. We play'd afterwards at Quadrille, & at half an hour after eight I came away & stopped at Lady Charlotte Burgoyne's, where I had been invited to a party at Lu. I had much better have gone home, for I was not much amused & lost sixteen guineas and a half."

In 1767 Lady Mary took up her abode in a house at Notting

Hill, near Bayswater, at that time a secluded village, desolate, lonely, and unsafe. Of the life at this "country seat," as she calls it, we read many pages. They who know Notting Hill as it is, with its stately squares, its fine crescents and its prim terraces, may well be excused a sigh as they reflect upon what it must have been like in the second half of the eighteenth century. In one place Lady Mary Coke makes the following entry: "Friday, Sept. 20, 1767.—The Weather tho' not what it was in this month last year, by twelve O'clock is very fine ; till then the great dues, & sometimes a good deal of fog, makes it unpleasant. The Man has been with me again about the alterations in my Garden, but we have not quite agreed ; to-morrow I am to determine. In a Walk now overgrown with rubbish, & which I propose making fine, I have to-day cut *a view of Hampstead and Highgate*, & intend having a bench. I do assure you the prospect everywhere is delightful, & when it is in a little order I think you will admire it."

Very numerous are the expressions of regret to which Lady Mary Coke gives vent in her journal for October, 1767, at the death of the Duke of York. "I was not born to be happy," she remarks pathetically in one place, "& the same ill fortune that attended me early in life attends me now." "In the evening I fancy'd I heard the firing of Cannon, but I believe it was only imagination. Guns and tolling of Bells are for ever in my ears." "In the Evening I was worse than usual. I cou'd not read any time together. I pray'd to God to assist me to bear as I ought the seeing myself deprived of every expectation of happiness in this world. I was afterwards more composed." Then follows another entry to this effect: "Saturday.—I have passed a terrible night ; cou'd not sleep any time together ; yet four times I dreampt the same dream. I thought I was in Westminster Abbey, & the funeral service was performing for the poor Duke, that I had not resolution to go into the Chapel, but sat down on a Tomb in another part of the Abbey, when I thought the figures on the Monuments moved. I then seemed to be left alone, & fancy'd I was shut up, but on walking down one of the great Isles I saw a door open, which I went out, & was then perplexed walking about the streets. My mind was so disturb'd that I rose early & went into my garden, stay'd out till twelve O'clock, then came in, dressed, and went to Gunnersbury."

Our readers will doubtless have noticed in many of the foregoing citations from the journal that Lady Mary's orthography is occasionally very defective. In the eighteenth century this blemish was almost universal among people of rank, as their published correspondence amply testifies. And even King George the Third himself, in the letters that he addressed to his ministers, contracted words and slipped into ill-spelling now and then.

The two volumes before us carry Lady Mary Coke's journal only down as far as 1768, and it is hoped that the publication of it will be continued at least as far as Lady Mary's last visit to Vienna in 1774. The editor has judged, in our opinion most rightly, that as one of the objects in printing the journal was its preservation, it is better that it should be given entire rather than in fragments. The printing and the binding of these sumptuous quartos leave nothing to be desired, and we close them not without returning our hearty thanks to the Earl of Home for the gratification which the perusal of them has afforded us.

WILLIAM CONNOR SYDNEY.

"Attached to the Regiment."

A SHORT STORY IN TWO CHAPTERS.

By DAISY PENDER CUDLIP.

CHAPTER I.

"IT'S about as bad a case as I've met with. Poor chap, he doesn't stand much chance of a recovery. I've just spoken to the colonel and told him he really ought to let the mother know ; if she wants to see her son alive she must come at once. Cameron hasn't many days to live, unless I'm very much mistaken."

Surgeon McLean, attached to the —th Highlanders, was the speaker, and his usually sunny Irish eyes wore a troubled expression, for the man whom he had just pronounced to be beyond recovery was the most popular man in the regiment, and their pride in all things that called for pluck and endurance. In fact, it was this very attribute which brought him to his present pass. A fearless, plucky rider to hounds, he had come to grief, no one exactly knew how, but was discovered insensible under the lifeless body of his horse, which had evidently been strangled in its futile endeavours to get free of the barbed wire fence in which it was caught.

Captain Cameron was carried back on a shutter to barracks, where he had remained ever since, with concussion of the brain, caused by a kick from his struggling horse, and a dislocated shoulder.

For two or three days his condition was considered serious, but by no means hopeless. Then, however, fever set in, and Captain Cameron, the usually strong, robust man, was reduced to a state of utter weakness that was pitiful to see. Before, he had been wildly delirious, but now an occasional moan of pain was the only sound or sign of life that escaped from his parched lips. The usually cheery Irish doctor and the hospital nurse shook their heads ominously, and agreed that his people ought to be sent for at once. Accordingly the colonel had been told, and he wired to London for Mrs. Cameron to come without delay, if she wished to see her son alive.

The news that Archie Cameron was actually dying came as a thunderbolt upon his brother officers, as they were assembled in groups in the ante-room after mess for somehow the idea of death and Archie Cameron seemed so utterly incongruous that they failed to grasp it ; but when McLean said that there was small chance of his recovery, then, indeed, things looked bad, and an air of gloom settled over the community, till one by one they left the ante-room. Each was filled with sadness at the thought of losing a good comrade, and had no heart for the company of the others.

In a very short time the room was deserted, save for one man who sat on, his chin resting in his hand absorbed in thought, and apparently oblivious to all that went on around him ; he sat on and on without moving, until the fire died down, and nothing remained but a dull red glow, which falling in with a thud, burnt up for a few moments and then gradually died out altogether. This roused the man from his sad thoughts with a start. "Good God !" he exclaimed, " and Archie will die, will just go out like that fire, and then—ugh"—with a shudder—" I can't bear to think of it. Oh, my friend, dear old friend, it is hard to lose you like this, you who have braved such hardships and dangers at Suakin to die in your bed, while I live on, a mere nothing compared to you. If only I could give my life for yours, I'd give it willingly ; but it won't save you, old friend, so I shall just have to live on without you ; but it's hard, cursed hard !" He was muttering these words, partly aloud and partly to himself, moving rapidly about the room, as a man is apt to do when under the influence of a strong emotion. Suddenly he stopped short at the window, and drawing aside the curtains, he looked across the parade to a window with a moving light that threw weird reflections on to the blind, and at intervals he could clearly distinguish the shadow of the nurse as she stood apparently bending over the sick man's bed. He stood watching as if fascinated, for how long he did not know, until the barrack clock slowly tolled out twelve strokes that seemed to strike him with horror, for he winced at each stroke as though it hurt him. As the last echo died away he turned sadly and listlessly from the room, and went across to his own quarters, where he determined to wait, for what he did not quite know ; they might summon him at the last to see his friend, although now he was not allowed in the sick room for fear he

should excite or disturb the patient. "As if I would!" he muttered to himself. Meanwhile the telegram with its ominous summons had sped on its way, and Mrs. Cameron, prostrate with grief at the thought of losing her only son, seemed utterly incapable of doing anything in the emergency, but turned for support to the stronger character of her daughter Eleanor, commonly called Nell, who, although quite young, barely twenty, was fully able to justify the reliance placed in her.

"Come, mother dear, you must be brave for Archie's sake. Try to bear up until at least it is all over; but we require all our faculties about us if we are to be of any use or comfort to him."

"You do not understand what this means for me, child. Don't you know that he is dying? My boy Archie is dying, and nothing *we* can do will save him."

"Hush, mother, don't say that. I *know* he won't die. I feel somehow that our going may perhaps save him; at least I feel as if God is going to give him back to us, even from the very gate of death; but anyhow, all our strength will be required in nursing him back to life, so just you lie down, dear, and leave me to put up your things for you. You see we cannot possibly start until the early mail, and that is not till four in the morning; so in the meantime you really must rest."

Poor Nell, she tried to find comfort for herself in the hope that, at least, they might be in time to see Archie alive and be recognized by him. No, he could not, *must* not die, her darling idolized brother. Surely God will spare him to these two who love him so dearly; it cannot be that he is going to die; no, a thousand times, no. And so, in spite of the seeming hopelessness of the case, a new hope sprang up within her heart, and she began to plan in her mind how she would nurse him back to health and strength. Would the time never come for them to start? How the hours seemed to drag, while he, perhaps, was waiting, and longing for them to come. At last they were off, and hard work Nell had to prevent her mother from breaking down completely. Poor woman, she had accepted the worst, and nothing could persuade her to let in one ray of hope. However, Nell, in her endeavours to cheer her mother, had really firmly come to believe that Archie would not die; she felt he would pass through the crisis, until even Mrs. Cameron grew less despairing. The long, cold dreary journey was over at last, and securing a cab they drove straight

to the barracks through what seemed to them interminable dreary streets with a sea of mud in the roads, and to add to the dreariness of the picture, the rain was falling in that peculiarly soaking way that it acquires solely for the benefit of Plymouth. Truly the elements did not encourage feelings of hopefulness, and yet in spite of all Nell had an intuition that it would all end happily and Archie would recover.

Arrived at the Barrack Clock Tower the colonel was there to meet them ; he handed the ladies out of the cab with a very grave face, and in answer to the unspoken question in the anguished mother's face, he said :

" You are just in time, Mrs. Cameron. I fear he is sinking fast, but he is now quite conscious and has been asking for you and his sister. Will you follow me ? This is the way."

" Take us to him quickly, Colonel Barry, for dear Archie's sake. Mother, don't break down ; you must try and bear up."

Just as they reached the bottom of the flight of steps leading to the sick man's quarters, a young fellow came headlong down, and apparently without seeing anything, nearly ran into the party as they were going up ; it was the same one who had watched the shadow on the blind the night before. He drew himself on one side for the ladies to pass, hoping they might not observe him, for there were traces of recent tears on his face—a handsome boyish face it was, although its owner was about six and twenty but looked younger. Colonel Barry and Mrs. Cameron did as he wished and walked on apparently unheeding, but Nell, looking up and seeing him, with the traces of sorrow on his face, an unaccountable impulse impelled her to hold out her hand and say, " You have seen Archie ? Tell me, is he really going to die ? I know who you are ; you are 'Damon.' Archie always spoke of you as his 'Damon,' so I do not know your real name. Forgive my speaking to you in this way, but we have a common sorrow, which, I think, excuses me."

" Excuses you ! Miss Cameron, I'm very glad you have spoken to me ; and did he really call me 'Damon ?' That is worth hearing, for he is my dearest friend on earth ; in fact, he has been everything to me. You see I am quite alone in the world, and, by the way, my name is Harold Ferris at your service. Poor old chap, he knew me just now, but—but, I'm afraid he is sinking. Go to him

quickly, but God bless you for giving a kind word to me, when your own heart must be nearly breaking."

With these words he pressed her hand to his lips and abruptly left her. Nellie hurriedly ran on until she came to the door with her brother's name on it, then quietly turning the handle she slipped in and made her way to the side of the bed where, falling on her knees by her mother's side, she stretched out her hands towards the sick man. He took no notice, his eyes were closed. Good God! her heart stood still; he was dying and too late to recognize them. An awful stillness pervaded the room, and wonderfully Nell, looking at the opposite wall, noticed that her photograph was framed together with one of the young fellow she had called "Damon." So often in the most agonizing moment of our lives do trifles strike us.

How long that ghastly stillness lasted she did not know; it may have been only a few seconds, it seemed like hours. Presently, however, the nurse stepped forward softly and, leaning over the bed, looked at her patient, then turning towards the two kneeling women she motioned them to go, and whispered, "He is asleep; if he can sleep on now we may pull him through, please God."

Slowly and with a dazed look the mother raised herself from her knees; she could not grasp the idea, for she had already thought he was dead, and now to hear that he was only asleep and that there was really hope of his recovery, could she believe the evidence of her senses? Yes, he was sleeping peacefully and breathing quietly and regularly. "Thank God, thank God," she murmured, then went from the room afraid to trust herself, for the reaction was too great, and if she broke down she might wake him up.

Nell, on the other hand, knelt on, praying as she had seldom prayed before; her whole heart went out in one unspoken song of gratitude to God; she could not form her prayers, but they were heartfelt.

Presently the nurse touched her lightly on the shoulder, and motioned to her to get up from her kneeling position, but she shook her head; if she moved now, she would be bound to shake the bed, for she was stiff and cramped and would have to cling to it to help her, so she knelt on, until all feeling seemed dead, but she did not notice it; all her energies were concentrated in watching her brother's face, for the first sign of awakening and

recognition. Worn out at last she must have fallen asleep, for when Harold Ferris came up not long afterwards to hear the latest news of his friend, he opened the door and found her fast asleep with her head resting on the bed. Assisted by the nurse he lifted her up from her cramped position and carried her to the sofa, where they laid her.

"Poor young lady, she's just worn out with anxiety ; however, we'll let her sleep on now for a bit, then she'll be all the more fit to greet her brother when he wakes up ; he's having a splendid sleep now, and, please God, we'll pull him through."

"Nurse, you are a brick to give me such good news ; but where is Mrs. Cameron ?"

"Oh ! the colonel's lady came and fetched her across to go and rest in their quarters until Captain Cameron wakes, when I have promised to send across to her. The great thing now is to let the captain sleep on as long as he can, the longer the better."

"Is there anything I can do for you, nurse ?"

"No, thank you, sir ; I should advise a little rest to yourself. If I'm any judge, I should say you have not had much sleep lately."

"Oh, I'm all right—never felt better in my life—now that the dear old chap is a bit better ; but I'll go for a turn, and tell the good news to every one I meet."

With which he went away, and was immediately joined by several of his brother officers, anxious to hear the latest bulletin. Sympathy was not limited to the officers by any means. Every man and boy in the regiment rejoiced at the good news, for many a kind action had Captain Cameron performed in a quiet unobtrusive way which had won for him universal love and esteem, and they were counted fortunate men who served in his company.

A good hour passed before Nell woke, to find herself on the sofa, and wonder where she was in the first few dazed moments on awakening. Soon, however, it all came back to her, and hurriedly she got up from the sofa and went over to the foot of the bed, to return to her watch. "How did I get on to the sofa, nurse ? You couldn't have lifted me."

"No, Miss Cameron ; but your brother's friend, Mr. Ferris, came in, and finding you were dead asleep, he carried you to the sofa, where we thought you would rest more easily, and I'm sure your sleep has done you good. Just see how beautifully my

patient is sleeping ; he is literally drawing in new life with every breath. I really think that seeing you and his mother gave him the turn for the better, for before that he was about as bad as he could be, poor gentleman."

"I don't know what I should have done if he had died, he is such a dear, good brother to me, and every one loves him."

"I can see that, Miss Cameron ; and as for that young Mr. Ferris, he really seems to worship him, and his grief was terrible when he thought the captain was going to die."

"I always knew they were very fond of each other—Damon and Pythias they are called. I had never seen Mr. Ferris until to-day, but I recognized him from the photo which my brother Archie had of him."

"Recognized who, by what photo, eh, Nell ? "

The invalid on waking up had caught the last few words, and was trying to raise himself on his elbow ; the dislocated shoulder, however, soon reminded him that he could not exert himself, and he sank back on the pillows.

"Archie, dear old boy, you have had such a splendid sleep, and it has done you no end of good ; but you must not try to exert yourself in any way, or you will be worse again."

"Upon my word, Nell, I'm surprised to find myself still here ; I quite expected to find myself transported to another sphere, as those spiritualistic fellows term the great Hereafter. The word 'photo' convinced me I was still in the flesh, for I don't suppose photography is practised either 'up along or down along,' as the west country people say."

These words seemed to shock his sister, judging from the serious look on her face, so he hastened to add :

"Don't think me blasphemous, dear ; I didn't mean to speak lightly, and I'll promise not to offend again. But who were you speaking about just now ? "

"I was only telling nurse that I had never met your subaltern before, but I recognized him by having seen his photo ; but you must not talk and tire yourself, dear."

"Where is the mater, Nell ? Isn't she coming to see me ? "

"She is over at the colonel's, resting. We promised to call her as soon as you were awake ; I'll run across now myself and tell her."

Suiting the action to the word, Nell was out of the room and across the square to the colonel's quarters in no time. Mrs.

Cameron, her anxiety over for the present, was found discoursing volubly, as fond mothers are wont to do, to the colonel's wife about her son's many good qualities, and, for a wonder, the picture was not overdrawn, and, more wonderful still, Mrs. Barry was not bored by the recital.

Nellie eventually succeeded in bringing her mother away from her interesting conversation by telling her that the object of her eulogies was wanting to see her. As they were going back together two men watched them from the window of the mess; one of them was young Ferris, and the adjutant, a certain Captain Neill, was the other.

"By Jove! Ferris, what a good-looking girl that sister of Cameron's is. Will they be staying on long, d'you know?"

"I don't know," was the curt rejoinder. Harold Ferris felt annoyed, unreasonably annoyed, to hear her spoken of in the same casual way that ordinary mortals were spoken of; why he should feel so annoyed he did not stop to analyze.

"Because if they stay for any length of time, I shall cultivate the young lady's acquaintance. I wonder if she's fond of driving? If so, she shall drive my tandem as much as ever she likes; 'twill do her good to get away from the sick room sometimes."

"You seem to take it for granted that Miss Cameron is quite ready to be 'cultivated,' as you term it, by you."

"On the contrary, I should say she was decidedly stand off the grass, judging by the way she carries that very pretty head of hers; but that makes the game all the more interesting."

A thrill of gratified vanity, or was it perhaps something deeper, passed through the heart of young Ferris when he considered that this girl, who was evidently "stand off the grass," to use the slang expression of his companion, had volunteered to speak to him and appeal mutely to him for sympathy in her trouble, without even an introduction.

"I wish you wouldn't speak about Cameron's sister in that very off-hand way; she would not thank you if she knew of it."

"Well, my dear fellow, I am not likely to tell her, so where is the harm? But why this sudden championship of her on your part? Are you also smitten?"

"I wish you would leave her out of the conversation; she is my friend's sister, and I know he would be very angry to think she was discussed in this way."

"Come, I say, you are speaking rather strongly ; the head and front of my offending, after all, is not very great, and only amounts to my having given vent to the admiration which her personal appearance excited. Where is the insult in that ? "

Not having anything to reply to this, young Ferris stalked off, feeling unreasonably annoyed with Captain Neill for expressing his feelings about Nell Cameron in what he chose to consider an off-hand fashion. At the same time he would have been just as put out if Captain Neill had failed to express admiration for his friend's undoubtedly pretty sister ; but what annoyed him more than all was the thought that he, Captain Neill, would have such a pull over himself in the way of providing amusements for Nellie when she was off duty from the sick-room. Why hadn't *he* got a tandem that she could drive, or horses for her to ride ? Never mind, he would work the oracle and get Neill to let him be one of the party, quite regardless of the fact that two is company, three is none.

CHAPTER II.

IT was just a fortnight after Mrs. Cameron and Nell had come to Plymouth that speculation was rife concerning the latter. She had several times been seen in Captain Neill's dog-cart with himself, and, sitting behind, Mr. Ferris was invariably to be seen trying to look as if he enjoyed himself ; but every one will agree that the back seat of a dog-cart, when the person you would wish to be next is in front talking to a third person of whom you are jealous, is not the most enviable position..

Some people said they considered Miss Cameron very fast to drive about with two young men in that barefaced manner. This was said chiefly by girls, young or otherwise, who had never been given the opportunity of refusing such an offer. Others, again, commended her for defying conventionality and taking the goods the gods sent in her way.

As a matter of fact she was not at all fast, either in thought or action. The doctor had said she ought to take plenty of air without exertion in the intervals of rest which she took from the sick-room. Hearing of this Captain Neill put his dog-cart at her disposal ; but Mrs. Cameron, not liking the idea of her daughter driving strange horses, good whip though she was, accepted the offer on condition that he, Captain Neill, or Mr. Ferris went with

her to ensure her safety. Consequently Nell accepted the position quite quietly, and if every one seemed to think it all right she would not be the one to raise objections ; it was evidently a case of " Honi soit qui mal y pense."

The tandem is at the door with Captain Neill as Jehu ; Harold Ferris has gone up to Captain Cameron's quarters to call for Nell, who is dressed and waiting for the summons, and in the meantime is having what she calls a lecture from her brother. Very sweet she looks this bright winter morning ; a little soft fur cap surmounts the mobile *riante* face with its frame of red-gold hair. Her perfect figure is set off to advantage by the severity in the lines of her long driving coat. A soft fluffy fur boa gives the finishing touch to a very charming picture. What had Archie Cameron been saying to make his sister look so shy and embarrassed as Harold Ferris came into the room ? Only this : "Now look here, Nell, I won't have you playing fast and loose with Ferris ; he is my friend although he is only my subaltern ; he is too good a fellow altogether to be trifled with, even when my own dear little sister is the one to lead him on. Don't do it, Nell, unless you mean anything by it. I believe you *do* care for him"—noticing the sudden rush of colour to cheek and brow. "Never mind, darling, I'll keep your secret." As he finished these words the object of his remarks came into the room, and needless to say the colour did not vanish quite so quickly from Nell's cheeks. The fact was she was almost angry with her brother for mentioning a subject that she was trying to imagine she had not thought about, and it was galling to her to have this fact brought home to her before she had fully realized it in her own heart. However, at present she has her drive before her ; she will enjoy that and forget that she is falling in love with this handsome and rather impecunious subaltern.

It is a perfect morning for driving, bright, crisp, and exhilarating in the extreme. Plymouth is looking its very best, for the bright sunshine gives the necessary touch of colour to what is otherwise a grey town. The ponies also feel the influence of the sharp invigorating atmosphere, and go down the hill from Main Guard to the Halfpenny Gate with a speed that is simply delicious, as they twist in and out of the traffic and negotiate the corner by Durnford Street so as to just manage to avoid the tram as it whirls round the corner and up the hill.

Nellie has quite recovered herself and is talking to Captain Neill with more than usual vivacity, drawing his attention to people and things as they pass them in their rapid progress. As a rule Captain Neill may be considered a remarkably good whip, quite content when on the box seat to give himself up entirely to the business in hand, namely, the successful handling of his high-spirited ponies. To-day, however, he is driving recklessly and carelessly, and giving far too much attention to his pretty companion, to the detriment of his reputation as a good whip.

Harold Ferris, who is seated behind in his usual solitary position, notices this as their leader has very nearly brought them into collision with the various vehicles that circulate through George Street. Anything like a remonstrance he knows would only call forth a retort to mind his own business or get out if he was nervous. As he is not nervous on his own account, and so not wishing even to appear so, he determines to possess his soul in patience and be ready to rush to the leader's head in any emergency, when—"Hi! you there! look out!" is shouted, apparently close to him; but in a moment horses and dog-cart are hopelessly mixed up with the shaft and wheels of a huge dray. A volley of very unparliamentary language from the driver of the said dray, a good round swear from the tandem driver, and they are all shot out into the road right under the heels of the kicking and terrified ponies. Luckily a passer-by with his wits about him had caught hold of the leader's head and held the terrified animal by his nose and ear, otherwise had he bolted they all three must have been killed.

"Don't cling on to me like this, Miss Cameron; let me free myself. Are you hurt?"

"I am not holding you, I am caught myself. No, I'm not hurt, but I can't move; I am pinned down."

Meanwhile, in less time than it takes to write, Harold Ferris had extricated himself and rushed round to the assistance of the other two.

"Hold on a bit, Neill, don't move, while I free Miss Cameron."

In a few moments he had cut away the reins, which had in some extraordinary way got twisted round Nell's arms and caught behind her back. Once freed from this she was able to get free of the *débris*, and with Harold's assistance to lift herself up, but she had reckoned without her host; her ankle was injured,

and she fell back, or would have done so had not Harold caught her in his arms. The usual crowd had gathered and were offering all sorts of wild suggestions as to what had better be done.

"Better put the young lady in a cab and take her home, I reckon ; she can't walk with a sprained ankle."

This advice was certainly sound, so hailing a passing fly, Harold carried Nell across to it and put her inside. He was shutting the door of the cab and going to give the address, when she stopped him by saying :

"Mr. Ferris, you will come with me ; don't let me go alone ; do come."

A swift flush of pleasure rose to his cheek as he answered :

"To obey your least wish is my greatest pleasure," and suiting the action to the word he took his seat beside her. Meanwhile Captain Neill had emerged from under his dog-cart looking very much battered about and dishevelled. The knowledge that he looked so did not improve his temper, neither did the fact that Miss Cameron had gone off under Harold Ferris's charge tend towards that end.

"Hullo, Neill, come to grief, I see. But what is it? Can I be of any use?" The speaker was Surgeon McLean, who had just arrived upon the scene.

"I should think you could see what it is pretty clearly ; the remains of a once dog-cart. But if you want to be of any use go back to barracks and see to Miss Cameron ; she has sprained her ankle. I must stay and see things cleared up a bit."

"Do you mean to say you have let Miss Cameron go back alone?"

"No, hang it all, man, Ferris went with her."

"Oh! I see how the land lies," and with this the doctor left Captain Neill to his own meditations and made straight for the barracks.

* * * * *

"Don't think me a brute, but I am almost glad that this accident has happened, as it has given me a chance of looking after you. But that poor little foot—how I wish mine were hurt instead."

"I don't think you a brute at all, and I am very *glad* it all happened."

These last words were spoken very softly.

"Say that again, Nell, my darling. Can I, dare I, ask you? I must tell you I love you; I loved you the first moment I saw your sweet face and heard your voice. I don't know how long ago that was, but time does not count. Nellie, can you love me?"

We know Nellie's secret, and what her answer would be, and so they settled it.

* * * * *

Several of the officers of the —th Highlanders are standing outside the mess of the Raglan Barracks waiting for somebody or something; the pipe-major with the pipers are strutting up and down by the Clock Tower piping away with all their might at the liveliest of Scotch melodies, and to the evident delight of a small group of people who are waiting to see what it is that the "sogers" are waiting for. Suddenly an orderly hurries up to the group outside the mess and informs them that "they are coming." There was no need to tell them, for simultaneously with the pipes piping the "Campbells are Coming," a carriage drawn by a number of picked men from B Company comes under the archway of the Clock Tower, and a hearty cheer goes up from the barrack square, where most of the regiment have turned out to welcome—? Captain and Mrs. Ferris. For this is two years since "they settled it" in the cab, and Harold Ferris, who is now a full blown captain, is bringing home his bride. Very charming Nell looks in her dress of regimental tartan, with the silver piper's buttons, and a neat little sailor hat with the colours of the regiment.

"You must let me welcome you among us, my dear, for your brother's sake as well as your own; you are 'Nell of Ours' now, you know."

So spoke the colonel as he handed Nell out of the carriage.

"Ah, I see you have studied the regulations and donned the regimental tartan."

"Yes, of course, for you see, colonel, I am now *very much* 'attached to the regiment.'"

A Strange Revelation.

By PLEYDELL NORTH,
Author of "M. LE CURE," etc.

I AM a professional nurse, holding the position of sister of the Accident Ward in the Metropolitan Hospital. A short time since a man was brought in who had been knocked down and run over by a cart ; a not uncommon occurrence ; but in this instance the interest attaching to the case was greater than usual. The new patient belonged evidently to a superior class of life, and it was said that he had suffered through trying to save a woman.

The woman, who was drunk, escaped unhurt ; and it seemed to us that the life saved must have been of less value than the life sacrificed, for it was known from the first that this man's injuries were fatal. Although apparently exempt from the more common anxieties of life, his face bore evidences of a closer acquaintance with the seamy side than even the majority can claim. Perhaps this, and the whiteness of his hair and beard, made him look older than he really was ; I should have imagined him about sixty-five, but he was powerfully built, and apart from his accident showed few signs of loss of vigour. As a part of my duty, I was present when his wounds were first dressed. He must have suffered terribly, but I never saw such almost super-human endurance. When the torture was over and he opened his eyes they rested upon me. A look of astonished gladness stole into them, and the faintest tinge of colour rose to the white cheeks.

He reminded me at that moment of some one whom I knew to have died more than twenty years before. Afterwards, when I moved about the ward, I often felt that he watched me. He was very feeble from loss of blood, and could speak little. Questions as to his family or friends seemed to annoy him ; when asked if there were any one with whom he wished to communicate, he only mentioned a priest. No inquiries were made as to his fate ; no one came to see him. He lingered three days. I did all I could to make those days peaceful, and I am glad to think

that after the first his sufferings were slight. Indeed, if we had not known the absolute hopelessness of the case, we should have thought him better.

Once I found him writing in pencil in a leathern pocket-book, which had been taken from his coat and placed under his pillow at his request. The priest remained with him the greater part of the last night. Protestant as I am, I was glad, when other more solemn rites were over, to kneel behind the shelter of the screen, which alone separated the bed from the rest of the ward, and join in the prayers for the dying. It seemed a lonely and sorrowful ending ; yet it was shorn of the materialism which makes the majority of the death beds we see so painful. If there were no tears of keen personal grief, so also there was no intrusion of personal or worldly anxiety.

I never saw any one apparently so glad to die as John Grey, after he had fulfilled the last duties of his religion. As the end approached, and in the absolute calm that succeeded it, the likeness I have spoken of recurred to me more and more strongly.

The day after the funeral I received a message from the house surgeon asking me to come to his room for a few minutes on a matter of business. I was a little surprised. Such messages were rare. I went down and found he was not alone ; the priest whom I had last seen by the bedside of John Grey was with him.

After a few kindly remarks, which made me wonder still more why I had been sent for, Father Lawson said :

"I have a commission to execute, sister ; a trust to put into your hands. John Grey begged that this might be given to you the day after he should be buried."

He held out to me the little black pocket-book.

I took it wondering.

"I should advise your examining it in our presence," said the surgeon kindly.

It seemed at first to contain nothing but some pages of writing, then in one of the pockets I discovered two old letters ; letters that I knew, though the ink was faded and the paper yellowing fast. I opened them with trembling hands, for I myself had written them—nearly thirty years before, when I was a girl of nineteen, and to be alive seemed a happy thing.

The doctor saw that I was greatly troubled, and kindly interposed to give me the relief of meeting this mystery alone.

"There seems to be nothing here of any consequence," he said cheerfully. "We thought it advisable, in case the book should contain money or papers of value—such things have happened, you know—that you should have witnesses to the manner of your obtaining them ; but I am afraid your legacy is not a substantial one."

I tried to smile and express my astonishment at having been chosen so strangely to receive anything whatever, then thankfully withdrew.

"If the papers throw any light on the dead man's antecedents or family that ought to be acted upon, you will let us know," Mr. R—— added, as he held open the door for me to pass out. The priest said nothing, but I thought he watched me with strangely pitying eyes.

I could not obtain leisure to read the contents of the pocket-book until after the patients were settled for the night, then, in my little room off the ward, I made out the carefully penned lines. The ink was fading, as in my own letters, and the characters were almost as familiar ; but the secret they revealed was more startling than any conjecture that had crossed my brain. To make its connection with myself understood, I must add a few words of a history that, apart from it, is ordinary and commonplace.

I was a girl of eighteen when I first met the two men, Guy Ormsforth and Bryan Galbraith. Both were introduced to me at the same ball. They were cousins, but not troubled with even that family likeness, which is a sort of inconvenient and unsought advertisement. Each possessed a marked individuality and belonged to a distinctive type.

Ormsforth, although slim and slight in figure, was a man of great physical strength. His face was shaven, the features cleanly cut ; his eyes were keen, and ready with swift glances, suggestive both of temper and penetration ; but they also softened quickly into kindness. As I learned to know him afterwards he was sensitive, honest-hearted, nervous and quick-tempered.

Bryan Galbraith, also tall, was stouter in build and undeniably handsome ; one of those men who in society gain a reputation for doing all things well, because they never risk doing anything badly—and who almost invariably succeed in the larger issues

of life—often through a sheer force of animal spirits which refuses to acknowledge defeat. He meant to fascinate me that first night, and unfortunately he succeeded in that.

I have learned to believe the mouth to be a far more reliable index of character than the eyes. The eyes of Bryan Galbraith were laughing, innocent, full of the pleasant truthfulness of a boy. His mouth was hidden by a heavy fair moustache. At eighteen one does not make close studies of character. Bryan Galbraith caught my fancy ; his light-heartedness responded to my own youth. It was the more striking because he was then a man of thirty, and experience had also taught him to assume towards women a protecting and deferential manner, which in those days girls found pleasant. On occasions he could be most gravely considerate. I am trying to excuse my own folly. For Ormsforth fell honestly in love with me. I knew it from the first ; but he allowed my sway over him to become too absolute, and of course, I preferred Bryan. I believe the desire to outshine Ormsforth made Bryan propose to me ; but I did not think so then. Of course also my guardian was annoyed at my choice ; he did not share my infatuation, and Ormsforth was wealthy.

More quickly even than usual, six months after my marriage, I began to feel my mistake ; for my husband wearied of me. Ormsforth's fidelity had never failed ; in my selfishness, when I was infatuated by Galbraith, and still uncertain whether he would ever ask me to be his wife, I had begged the man who loved me, and whose love I had refused, to continue to be my friend. It was a selfish act, thoroughly selfish ; at that time his companionship was a relief from my own anxiety ; afterwards, when I imagined myself happy, I neglected him, and he accepted my neglect. When I awoke to the truth, he came back ; not as a lover : he was more careful of my pride and my honour than in my first desolation I might have been myself but for his caution.

Within the year Bryan left me. He said business called him to Paris, and asked me for a cheque for his expenses, while he allowed me to feel very plainly that he did not want my companionship. For Bryan never had any money. I was what is called an heiress—moderately so—but my guardian had taken care that all I had should remain under my own control—an amount of prudence which at the time had filled me with

indignation. I was too proud to refuse that cheque—the money was the least part of the sacrifice.

He was away more than a year, and after the first month his letters ceased. It was some six weeks later that I heard of the death of Guy Ormsforth. He had started on a walking tour along the northern coast of France before Bryan had spoken of leaving me, and I was daily expecting his return, looking forward to it as the one brightness in my barren life, when the news arrived. The circumstances of his death were exceedingly painful. He had left his hotel to walk to a village about fifteen miles away along the coast. He never returned, and he never reached the village. A fortnight later a body was washed ashore and found lying among the rocks not many miles away. It was past certain recognition, but a silver cigar-case, engraved with the monogram G. O., and which I remembered well, was found in one of the pockets. He was terribly cut and bruised. It was the first time I had felt the near touch of death, and I grieved deeply, knowing how I should miss the fidelity I had been so slow to value. But this natural sorrow was driven from my mind by a blow which in the force of its bitterness made gentler grief seem almost a benediction, and thrust me into a keenness of suffering in which I felt every breath drawn an outrage on the life that I had thought mine.

One morning I was told that a young woman wished to see me who refused her name. I replied that I saw no one under those conditions. I already knew enough of my husband's career to practise caution. Then she asked for a scrap of paper, wrote upon it, "I am Mrs. Bryan Galbraith," inclosed it and sent it up to me. There was no pity in the swift directness of the retort. At once, when I read the words, I felt that they were true, but shrinking dumbly from that inward acknowledgment, I hurried down, telling myself that I only went to seek their refutation.

In my dining-room sat a woman, still young and bearing traces of considerable beauty. She looked refined and of gentle birth. By her side leaned a boy of perhaps five years old. She made a slight movement of surprise when I entered, and did not immediately rise. Her dress was cared for, but very poor—mine had been made in Bond Street. A diamond guard protected my marriage-ring—hers showed plain and unguarded

upon the thin white hand that clasped the child. I stood before her, my shame growing into my heart. After the pause of that first moment she rose to greet me. Her manner was patient and sad, free alike from boldness and confusion.

"I have been told that Mr. Bryan Galbraith lives here," she said in a clear soft voice. "The servant said that Mrs. Galbraith only was at home. I thought perhaps I might see my husband's mother."

For the moment I waived the question of relationship. I saw that she was at any rate unconscious of imposture. She had landed with her child only the day before from New Zealand, and was unhesitatingly ready to give seemingly indisputable proofs of her story. She told me the names of the place and the church where she had been married, and showed me a copy of the certificate. Everything was quite straightforward, and easy to verify or disprove. Apparently, with his usual daring, Bryan Galbraith had only counted on her ignorance of his position, and the length and expense of a journey to England for security. I managed to keep my own secret, at any rate from open avowal, and tried to lead her to infer that Bryan Galbraith was but an occasional visitor in the house, which belonged to me, his brother's widow. I could honestly tell her that I was quite uncertain as to when he would return. She seemed in utter despair when she understood that her quest had failed—that the man she sought was not even in England. She had tracked him so far through one of those acts of carelessness which the cleverest fall into at times. Among some apparently useless bills in an old desk she had found the name and address of his London tailor, which he had failed to destroy ; and from this firm she had learned where he was now supposed to be living.

In the prostration that followed her disappointment, I saw that this poor girl was very ill, and my heart melted towards her. Then she told me a little of her story. She had been a governess before she met Galbraith, and in her later destitution the family in which she had lived had advanced the money for her journey to England. She also had had her brief dream of happiness before this man wearied of her as he had wearied of me, but the illusion with her had lasted a little longer. He had left her on the old plea of business in England, urging her failing health as a reason for her not going with him. For a time he had sent

her money ; but letters and remittances had both gradually ceased, until she saw only starvation before her, burdened as she was with her child and no longer able to work. I think anxiety for the future of that child had been her chief motive in coming —for herself she would not have cared. Yet God knows, with all her deep sorrow, how I envied her : she was surely an honest woman still.

I could not keep her with me ; but I took her to the house of an old servant who had two vacant rooms, and saw that she had all she needed. I let only one person into my confidence—my solicitor, Mr. Lewis. By his advice, a trustworthy person was sent out to New Zealand to make inquiries. The verification of her story, telegraphed home, arrived the day after Mildred Galbraith died. For no care could save her. I suppose hardship had developed a natural tendency to consumption, for she sank into a rapid decline. Almost from the first, the doctor said, she was beyond hope. I promised her the child should be well cared for, and I left him in the charge of the landlady, my late house-keeper, until his father should arrive. Nature would not let me do more—I could not bear him with me.

At the end of the year Bryan came. I had heard nothing to soften my heart towards him. His crime against me was but a type of his life. If he had betrayed the women who trusted him, he had also betrayed his friends. In the silence of his lengthened absence, stories, complaints and accusations crept out, which his presence had subdued. Men proclaimed him a drunkard, a gambler, a trickster—and into the midst of it all he came. I was sitting brooding wearily enough over my wrongs when I heard a man's step upon the stair ; and I wondered who it could be that had thus ventured in unannounced. Another moment and Bryan Galbraith stood in the doorway. My anger rose afresh when I saw him. It was nothing less than a cool insult thus to thrust himself upon me, and I rose to meet him, pride mastering even my bitter shame. My first glance told me that he knew he was in my power. He made no attempt to come forward, but stood motionless, apparently afraid to look me in the face.

His silence and quiet gave me time to study him. He was in no way altered, except that he looked as though recovering from recent illness.

"You venture to come here?" I said at last. "By what right do you intrude upon me? I know what I am—what you have made me."

"I have come only for one reason: to ask if any reparation be possible."

I was unprepared for this answer. It was unlike all my previous experience of him.

"The only reparation possible would open before me a worse hell," I said abruptly.

I had in fact been weighing in my mind for weeks past—ever since Mildred's death—the possible tardy regaining of my lost honour against the misery of being legally in the power of this man, and my speech was the outcome of this train of thought.

He showed neither surprise nor annoyance, and his quietude irritated me afresh.

"I suppose you are aware," I went on, "that your wife died a few doors from here in my arms?"

"I know it all. I have seen Lewis; and I repeat I have come to offer you what reparation lies in my power."

When he had said this he came forward into the room, and seating himself in an arm-chair nearly opposite to me, put down his hat and waited again. He had the air of a man whose nature had been forced into quietude by the power of some great shock. I wondered, could it be Mildred's death that had so affected him? I saw that he was in earnest; that an honest name might be mine again if I chose. But the price? I buried my face in my hands. Whichever way I looked, I saw only misery and fresh degradation.

Then he spoke slowly and quite gently. "I know of what you are thinking; I know that my presence must be abhorrent to you. But, believe me, I will never force it upon you. You shall never hear from me nor see me."

A sudden possibility of peace opened before me. I saw the chance of stepping out of a land of loathsome shadows into at least quiescent light.

"You mean this?" I said eagerly.

"Indeed I do; I will draw up any form that may be needful to secure your peace of mind and make my promise legally binding. You can place it in Mr. Lewis's hands. No one else need know."

The eyes which looked into mine were so ineffably sad that I almost pitied him. Whom had this man loved? It is needless to say that I consented. A few days later we were married by special licence at Mr. Lewis's rooms, and the papers ensuring my freedom placed in his hands. I exchanged only the few necessary words with my husband, then we parted. I never saw him again.

He refused to accept any share of the income which was justly his; and the sums which I caused to be paid into his account at the bank remained untouched.

Both he and Ormsforth had been called to the bar. With my husband any profession was always purely nominal, but before long I heard that he was now working unremittingly. He succeeded later to a considerable portion of his cousin's estate, as heir at law; the death being considered proved. It was then reported that he devoted almost his entire income to the clearing of old liabilities, reserving the capital intact for his son. He lavished every care upon the boy, and I began to think that in truth he must have loved Mildred with a passion of which I had not thought him capable. But I was slow to believe in the change. I felt convinced that the old nature would assert itself sooner or later; but I never heard that it did.

He must have had uphill work at first; prejudice was strong against him, and the shackles of old associations with their consequences were hard to shake off. In the midst of his difficulties there were times when I felt that I could have gone to him had he given the slightest sign, but I shrank from making the first move. Afterwards, when he had conquered and grown into fame, it was impossible. Then suddenly, in the midst of success, he accepted an appointment in S. America. He took his son, now a lad of fifteen, with him and I heard no more of either. My life grew monotonous and dreary; even had I been certain of my husband's death I should never have married again.

Soon after his departure for America I entered a hospital as a probationer, and since that time have entirely devoted myself to my profession.

That is all I can tell you on my side; I now copy the words of the diary that you may form your own judgment as to the actual facts.

"July, 184.—Was it justified? Surely, if the removal of

abnormal evil, the extinction of a viciousness that threatens to spread immeasurable ruin, can be reckoned a righteous act. And yet, the awful void left by a life that has lived and lives no more is before me, and out of that void I see ever the eyes that pleaded for redemption.

"They are my condemnation, and force from me the prayer of my agony. 'Would to God—the God whom I have denied—in whose place I have substituted irresponsible force—that mine had been the life laid down.'

"We were walking on the shore when he opened before me the full sink of his iniquity. He talked lightly, flinging the story on the soft summer wind, that surely sighed beneath the burden of his words, sullyng the fair sunshine, casting a mist of darkness over the shining sea. I walked further apart from him, and he shouted the words louder—there was none but I to hear—laughing a little in the pauses of his talk. I knew that he had been drinking heavily, otherwise he would have been more cautious and less truthful.

"I felt that I hated him, loathed him with a deadly loathing. We had been at school together and I had found it out in part: the cunning, the mean cheater, the cowardice; but his handsome face and frank ways had carried him safely through, shielding him with the majority, even from suspicion.

"Later on they had won *her*. They had enabled him to keep his viciousness a hidden tale until now—in very wanton indifference laughing at the secret of my fancied powerlessness—he flung it forth, finding a keenness of delight in torturing me.

"For he knew that I loved her; that so long as his exposure meant her dishonour, he was safe.

"I walked on rapidly, keeping silence. Presently we reached a rough pathway, worn up the almost perpendicular cliff. It was formed by a series of ledges of rock, the intermediate spaces covered with crumbling soil, where some grasses had sprung and a few bushes taken root.

"'The tide is coming in,' he said. 'We had better get up the cliff here.'

"It was nothing of a climb, but we were obliged to go in single file. He was in front of me. He turned round from time to time as he pointed out the successfulness of his villainy, the helplessness of his dupes. We were half way up the cliff when I

saw ahead of us a ledge of rock larger than the rest, a flat ledge upon which perhaps two men might stand. As we neared it I suddenly swung myself in front of him, holding by the bushes. I gained the flat stone just as he was about to place his foot upon it, and seized him round the body. The movement was swift and took him utterly by surprise. It was alike impossible to advance or retreat ; to struggle there meant certain death for one or both. His eyes looked into mine, and I saw a sudden ghastly terror chase away the sparkle of their devilry.

"‘Ormsforth, are you mad?’ he panted.

“Yes, I was mad. I thought of *her*, the sweet face lined with tears, the fair head dishonoured, the gentle heart broken, as ere long it must be if I let him live.

“‘Mad or sane, you shall answer to me here for your villainy.’

“Then we closed in the struggle that must be mortal. He could not escape. I was the stronger man of the two ; my rage made me fearless. It mattered nothing to me that he might drag me with him to certain death. It would have been better so. But he was afraid throughout—terribly afraid. In the struggle we swung round, and he was on the outside. Before long I felt his grip relax ; he was falling—falling backwards. I had the impulse then to drag him back, but the impetus given by that swing was too strong.

“Was it self-preservation ? Was it justice ? Was it—murder ? I loosed my hold. Once more his eyes looked into mine, wide open with growing horror, and pleading for salvation.

“I know that he was killed. I know that he was carried out to sea by the tide. I know this, for I waited and watched until another day dawned, not caring whether I were discovered or not.

“Now almost a year has passed, and I have received no tidings from the outer world ; but if I hoped that in coming here I should gain solitude my hopes have failed.

“The link that in life seemed to connect my fate with that of Galbraith is unbroken by death, and its results are the same.

“We fought for the same prizes at school, and he invariably won ; we loved the same woman, and he won again ; then the last struggle, and I—did I win that time ?

“I gave him a new birth—a birth into the illimitable. I shook him into a sudden awakening, a consciousness of his own vileness, in that last hour of mortal peril, into the fear and loathing of it. I

did this ; I see it in his eyes. I say I see it, for now I come to the heart of my bitterness. Through all these months, this man, dead to the world, has lived to me. I feel his power ; he is stronger than I, stronger in the spirit than he was in the body. He is drawing my very soul into his ; I feel the depth of his remorse ; I hear his wild regrets for the evil he left unatoned. And the closeness of this communion has wrought a transformation even more terrible.

"I knew it finally to-day. I looked into the mirror for the last time hoping that the horror which had been unfolding itself during the past months would prove a madness or a dream, and in the broad daylight, and in, I firmly believe, the full possession of my senses I saw that it was true.

"The reflected image that looked back at me was the image of Bryan Galbraith. The eyes were the eyes that had flashed into mine that sunny day upon the cliff as he fell backward from my grasp into death.

"I have read of a likeness growing between those who live in constant companionship and close communion in the natural order. What mortal companionship or communion can equal in closeness the intimacy that has been forced upon me by the man I strove to thrust from the earth for ever? What does it mean? What will be the end? Must I lead a dual life, bearing his burden as well as my own? Is the life I thought I had destroyed and dismissed into nothingness, inextricably united to mine, until death summon me to stand alone—surely alone, then, at the last—before the Judge in whom I can no longer disbelieve?

"There is one chance for me. The change which is so apparent to me may be hidden from the eyes of other men. Yet I see the fishermen on the beach look at me strangely ; their wives whisper together as I pass, and the children crowd together or run away and hide. The change has come gradually, startling no one in the process, as the change from youth to age.

"It is a punishment so appalling, stretching into the most minute details of life, allowing never a moment of respite or intermission. How can I bear it and live? Am I mad already? Is the whole some fiendish imagination?

"I will put it to the test. I will go back to the world that has known *me* and known *him*, and abide the verdict.

"The Regent, July 20th.—A week has passed since I made my last entry and started on my homeward journey. Already any doubt I may have had is settled beyond question. I came straight to this place, where I knew I should meet men who would recognize me in one character or the other. On my way to the coffee-room I entered a long corridor, when suddenly, in the light of the flaring gas, I saw coming towards me Bryan Galbraith. Face, gait, figure, all were his. There was no doubt. One moment of wild hope—then I knew that the end of that corridor was a sheet of glass. I could have yelled aloud in my helpless anguish. I had not been half an hour in the coffee-room when a man whom Galbraith had known intimately entered. I saw that he gave a start of recognition, but I kept the evening paper before me and waited. He came across the room, and I waited still, for the assurance either that I was a hopeless maniac or the victim of a worse doom.

"Why, Galbraith—surely it is Galbraith—where on earth, old fellow, have you been hiding?"

"I was obliged to answer him. I wondered grimly what my voice was like in his ears. He did not seem to notice anything remarkable. I replied to his eager questioning in as few words as I could; then made the excuse of an appointment. As I rose to leave him he laughed.

"I at least never believed you dead, my dear fellow; but it was a good move. That affair in Paris might have been awkward, by all accounts."

"He sauntered away, and I gained my own rooms.

"July 21st.—The struggle is over, and I have attained a certain calm. Have I succumbed or conquered? In the extinction of the life of Guy Ormsforth, in the outward re-creation of the man he killed, lies my atonement. I watched through the pitiless hours of the night by the closing of my own grave, reviewing the life of the man I had known—in manhood, childhood and youth—until it culminated in that last fatal act.

"It was not a life to lead naturally to such an ending; but neither was it a life to offer any preservative against it. But good or bad it will be known no more. There were old associations connected with it that were pleasant and very dear; but these I had already cut asunder with my own hand. In one way, my punishment is a boon. It is all my own; it will carry with it no

reflection of shame or suffering upon others, as would the knowledge of the truth. It remains only for me to make such atonement as lies in my power ; to redeem the past of Bryan Galbraith in his person, that such honour as may still be attainable may be accredited to him. There lies before me one all-important work: I must ascertain whether the New Zealand story is absolutely true ; and whether the poor girl left there is living. Also, he spoke of a child. It is possible that malice may have prompted him to make the worst of the position ; that Patricia may not prove to be, of the two women, the one most grossly deceived. There are, therefore, two chances—one for the preservation, the other for the restoration of her honour. In either case, she who has been my friend, the deep passionate adoration of my life, must be a stranger, bearing the title of my wife. That other alternative, the alternative that she may one day learn her dis-honour, without power of reparation, and regard me as its author, I hardly dare to face. The person most likely to be able to give me full particulars of her present position, and her feeling towards Bryan Galbraith, is Mr. Lewis, her solicitor ; also I shall be able to gather from him whether any suspicion as to the legality of her marriage has arisen during this year of silence ; and the general opinion as to the disappearance of Ormsforth.

" 23rd.—I have seen Lewis, and I have seen *her*. The news which Lewis had for me made my way clear. Mildred Galbraith has died in England under Patricia's care ; and Lewis alone knows the secret. What he thought of my share in it—the share for which I am answerable—he let me know with unmitigated plainness. Only the plan which I had already proposed to myself, and the desire to save her, made him consent to anything short of public exposure. I also learned from him that Ormsforth is supposed to have been drowned. The sea gave up its dead too late for the revelation of the secret. It was natural to suppose that the silent witness was mine. I had been seen to take the path to the shore. Bryan was believed to be in Paris—which he had, in fact, left the previous day. The clearest testimony was borne by the cigar-case—mine—I remember passing it to him when he first joined me. He never returned it. It was not likely I should remember to ask for it in what followed—the very fact had escaped my memory.

" In due time I inherit my own property—the greater part of it

—in the person of Bryan Galbraith, heir-at-law to his cousin, Ormsforth, in default of a nearer relation. I had made no will. This will be a material aid in the life before me. Bryan's son is in England, under the care of Patricia.

"After I left Lewis, I went straight to her. I went up unannounced. The servants were the same ; they knew me for their master, and were too well trained even to show surprise at my return. She was sitting alone and idle in the small drawing-room. Oh ! pitiful wreck of hopeless grief—life for life—soul for soul. I felt that I could bear the weight of my crime, of its expiation, if through it I might bring you some consolation. Her hands lay listless on her black gown ; her cheeks were pallid and sunken with weeping ; her eyes looked at me almost without surprise. They seemed dull and hard. And this wrecked life at twenty-one—was the doom of Bryan Galbraith too bitter ? If only his blood were not on *my* hands. What it cost me to stand there and face her scorn ! Darling, I never loved you as I love you to-day. You are more beautiful to me in the stricken abasement of your womanhood than in the brightness and freshness of the early days. I longed, sweetheart, to lay my head at your feet and tell you all the truth—all I had sinned and done for your sake—but the iron bar of separation, deathly in silence and helplessness, is between us ; and yet you will call yourself my wife. I said nothing of all this. I stood like a hound before her, and offered her my terms, and she accepted them. I am to give her the legal right to bear the name that has become mine, and after that never to see her or hear her voice again.

"30th.—The thing that I, Ormsforth, prayed for so madly in the old days has been granted me. Patricia Langton has stood by my side and touched my hand with hers, and of her own free will has made herself my wife. She looked calm, almost radiantly peaceful, as though thanking God for this great mercy shown her after such grief. She had gained something that was more than her old beauty. But she showed no signs of softening towards me. Since I dared not have accepted it, I thank God for that also. It is safer that she should believe that such love as Bryan Galbraith had to give is buried with his first wife. I saw her to her carriage ; when she turned her head I kissed the grey homespun gown she had chosen for her second wedding dress. Good-bye, my darling ; good-bye.

"Every day shows fresh difficulties and fresh dangers to be met—debts of honour and dishonour—claims and reproaches—entanglements where ignorance of the past makes action doubly perplexing, even with the aid of Galbraith's papers. But all pain all threatened exposure, seems slight after the dishonour I have borne before my wife. I have one consolation, a strange one: the child that calls me father, the son of the dead woman whom I never saw. From what I can gather, he must be like her; I trust he inherits her nature. I will write in this no more until the end is near. To keep a daily record of the struggles before me would be futile and against my purpose, which has been simply to leave a written statement of the truth."

Here followed a blank page, then a short entry in pencil, which must have been that I saw him write.

"The end has come. For twenty years I have carried with me this record and the two letters—the only letters I ever had from her, my wife—written when she was a girl and Guy Ormsforth her lover. When my work in England was done, I went abroad, thinking it would be easier to live where I should never hear her name. Now, believing the end to be near, I have come home, longing for tidings of her; hoping, perhaps, to catch a glimpse of her face before I die. My desire has been more than answered. I have been brought to die *here*; and the first person upon whom my eyes rested, in the dress of a hospital nurse, was my wife. She did not know me—how should she?—although her eyes looked into mine, filled with pity for the lonely man dying in her care. I gave the name of John Grey as the first that occurred to me. What does it matter? While I live she must never know the truth. I have no worldly cares upon my mind. I have settled all that; everything that was mine belongs to Bryan's son. She has promised to remain with me to the end—only a few hours—and to bring me the consolation of the religion to which in my extremity I have turned for strength.

"I believe I have redeemed my pledge. An infinite peace is taking possession of me, although it is Guy Ormsforth, the criminal, who is dying. The curse of my crime is leaving me, and I go alone and, I trust, forgiven.

"Farewell, sweet wife. Will the long, patient love of my life make you also forgive?"



The tears which I believed years of isolation and sorrow to have dried for ever rose with the tumultuous aching sobs of later age as I read these last words. I wept afresh over the grave of him whom I had mourned and missed for twenty years, and whom I had not known. The likeness that haunted me in the face of John Grey was the likeness of Guy Ormsforth. With the memory of that face, from which life failed, before me, I know what I believe ; but to the world I leave the identity of this man an open question. I suppose the only opinion tenable by reason or science would be that he was Bryan Galbraith, murderer and madman ; that the desire of Guy Ormsforth's wealth had impelled him to his worst crime, when he was already half-frenzied with drink ; and that the record of the diary was the record of the wild impressions of a diseased and tortured brain.

Have the deductions of reason and science ever been defied by inexplicable fact ?

My Friend the Major.

By MARY HAMPDEN.

My friend the major was evidently out of spirits. I did my best to please him ; I tried conversation, but he replied in monosyllables, and then I relapsed into sympathetic silence.

"By Jove! Mildmay," he exclaimed, "you might do or say something to enliven the way a little."

"My dear fellow, I thought you preferred your own thoughts."

"Pshaw ! my thoughts are not enviable."

My friend the major certainly was out of his usual spirits. We had been travelling together the greater part of the day, and I had observed that a strange depression was gradually assuming command over his temper.

He was leaning back in the corner of a ramshackle fly that was conveying us from the station to his place in Hertfordshire, his lips smiling superciliously at the improvements time had effected in the county, his eyes gazing sadly at the wintry landscape. He had not volunteered a remark all the way down from town, and yet he had the effrontery to blame me for the silence.

We had been brother officers ; had been, I say, for we had both attained to retiring age ; that very day we had taken leave of old comrades and were preparing to enter the noble corps of country gentlemen. Major John Cliffe ! Poor old fellow, he never would have been a major if a sweet-faced, false-hearted little country girl had not jilted him years ago in the very county we were traversing. I had heard the tale, and could guess the old associations which were crowding and pushing for notice in my friend's memory. Many a day we had stood shoulder to shoulder amid the darkest scenes, and I was not likely to desert him because of a harsh word or a peevish lecture.

"Ah !" I said to myself, "what a rascal Cupid is ! That must be the very stile where they met in the days of his boyish wooing ; his hands clench the evening 'special' till the paper rustles and quivers in his grasp. Stay—he is leaning forward to gain a better view of the church. Is he thinking of a wedding that might have been ? Can he picture the scene, the huzzaing

tenantry, the flowers and feathers, the blushing bride? No, I was wrong after all; he was gazing at the grave-yard, not at the church, at the marble cross which marks the resting-place of his many ancestors. Does he wish himself among them?"

As we passed the low wall which skirted the cemetery, Jack turned to me with a smile, the fit of ill-temper gone.

"Mildmay, old fellow, you won't thank me for bringing you to this out-of-the-way place. The house is dilapidated, I hear; the old servants must be deaf and stupid; my friends are dead or absent. You will wish yourself back at barracks before you've been half a week at Cliffe."

"Nonsense," I returned briskly; "I came for your society, not for your friends; to help you reform dilapidation, not to cavil at it. Country life may prove rather trying at first, but cheer up, old boy; it's a long lane that has no turning."

My commonplace remark was apparently prophetic; the road took a sudden turn to the left, and in less than a minute we were entering the gateway leading to as charming a country-box as it was ever my lot to see. The scene, fortunately, can be described in a few words. I agreed to write my friend's history, but did not bargain for incidental descriptions of rural surroundings.

A carriage-drive rounding a clump of laurel led to a low flight of steps, which, in their turn, gave entrance to a verandah, the very place for a bachelor smoke; the verandah was divided by a door which opened into a wide hall; the hall gave access to innumerable rooms all furnished with wise taste. No little side-tables standing at inconvenient angles for the purpose of displaying bewildering nick-nacks, no row of stiff-backed chairs ranged round the walls, suggesting a prayer meeting or a funeral; no vases on the floor, or milking-stools or other inappropriate objects; the place was evidently meant for life, for comfortable life. The servants *were* old and deaf, but my friend was hardly prepared for the respectful warmth of their reception; in their eyes he was still "Mr. Jack," not a stern bronzed man. Our dinner that night was badly cooked, and luke-warm when served, but (so much for sentiment!) we couldn't find it in our hearts to scold the aged retainers who lingered about the rooms and halted at the doorways to catch a glimpse of the "young master."

"Aye, it does one's 'eart good to look at 'im," murmured the old butler ; "a finer man nor 'is father, tho' e in 'is time was reckoned the 'andsomest man in the county ! "

"Jest to see 'im sittin' there, like the past days come back," echoed the white-haired housekeeper ; "an' I as nursed 'im on my knee when 'is poor mother was that ill she couldn't take 'im ; to think e'd 'ave growded to be such an 'onour to 'is country."

Jack rose and went to the door, shaking hands right and left, with a flush of pride on his brow and a glimmer of something else in his eyes. Well, we men don't care to own to sentiment, so I will say no more about our first evening at Cliffe.

Next morning we transacted business, examined leases and accounts, interviewed gardeners, coachman, &c., and paid a visit to the stables, where the major's gallant grey was shrilly neighing his contempt for his new surroundings. A few feeble old carriage horses were raising their downcast heads in wonder ; not an animal there (with the exception of the grey) that I would have valued at more than ten good sovereigns. My friend sighed heavily, and we passed on to the farm buildings, fruit gardens, vineeries, finding all alike dejected in appearance. We did not have a cheerful morning, and I was glad when the time came for walking back to lunch.

We sat talking and smoking late into the winter afternoon, and I was preparing my mind for a cosy evening, when Jack, rising and laying a hand on my shoulder, surprised me by saying :

"Mildmay, my dear fellow, I hope you won't be very much bored if I leave you alone ? I'm going for a ride round the country, but I shall not be long ; perhaps you have some letters to write ? "

Going out riding in the cold dusk ! Relinquishing light, wine, warmth, cigars, and the society of a man who was devoted to him ! My friend the major was out of spirits again. Poor old man ! He came home some hours later, wet through with the mist, and cold at heart, I knew. Cupid again. How much a false frivolous girl may have to answer for. I myself could fairly say that I feared neither foe nor danger, but I did fear love. "If a man once falls a prey to the tender passion," I said to myself, "there is no knowing what may become of him."

Jack was talkative after dinner.

"Mildmay, do you know any of the people round about ? "

"Well, there are the Leesons—I met Fred Leeson last year in India ; I could renew his acquaintance if I wished—and the Phipperings, the widow lady with the two pretty daughters who came to Aldershot once."

"I think I remember something about Miss Leeson. Wasn't she engaged to a man who broke his neck at York steeplechase?"

"Yes, a very fair girl with a neat little fortune."

The major smoked in silence for some few minutes, then, slowly removing his cigar, he crossed the room to the fire, and turning, faced my arm-chair. His expression was grave ; I had known him too many years not to be aware that he had arrived at some important decision, and I had not long to wait before he announced it.

"I told you I had a selfish motive in persuading you to come down to this dilapidated hole ; the place would be bad enough in May, but in October it is simply unbearable. You have given me your advice about the estate ; now I want you to find me a wife, Mildmay. I cannot pass Christmas here haunted by old memories ; the loneliness unnerves me You are the best friend a man could have, but you've never been jilted, so you don't understand—if I am not married before the festive season I shall go abroad for ever."

I was utterly surprised.

"But, my dear fellow, you might spend Christmas in town, and then come back again."

"If I once leave Cliffe, I leave it for ever. You have never failed me yet ; you will not desert me now ?"

"No, I couldn't, Jack, dear boy. I don't feel altogether satisfied, but I'll do my best. We will commence the wife-hunt to-morrow."

"You won't find me difficult to please, Mildmay. All girls are the same to me now ; only keep me from being deceived again."

"We had better begin by calling upon the Leesons. Margaret is supposed to be very charming—you might like to console her—twenty-nine, tall, good-looking."

"Sufficient for the day is the evil thereof. Come to bed, Charlie, and we will finish our talk and reckon up individual charms by the cool light of morning."

Jack Cliffe laughed sarcastically. "A very quiet, gentle girl will suit him best," I said to myself ; "he will fall gradually in love with her, will tell her his troubles, and discover that she alone

can comfort him. How fortunate that I should have thought of Margaret Leeson."

The morning found my friend's determination unchanged. He did not speak again upon the subject, but I heard him order the horses to be ready at eleven, a groom to follow. We discussed the weather, the daily papers, the shooting, carefully avoiding the least reference to Christmas, and at the time appointed we rode off, the major talkative, I feeling a terrible weight of responsibility. What if some confiding English girl should be persuaded into a loveless match? Would it comfort Jack, or would it lead to greater misery for them both? In any case had I the slightest right to try to bring about such a marriage? I was still undecided about the point when we entered the gates of Vale Lodge.

Fred Leeson—a bright young man, whom I rather liked—received us with enthusiasm. We were introduced to Margaret, and found her a reserved, languid girl, too much absorbed in the intricacies of worsted-work to pay more than the slightest attention to the conversation. Fred proposed a visit to the paddock.

"Hullo, Madge, you'd better come too."

She assented wearily; accepting the major's polite attentions with an indifferent bow and a shadowy smile; the cool crisp air failed to bring the least colour to her pallid cheek, and she held up an umbrella to shade her eyes from the wintry sun. As I watched her tall, slim figure passing along the garden path beside my friend, I felt very sorry for the shock and the trouble from which the poor girl was suffering, but was conscious of the fact that our first visit had proved a failure.

We were traversing one of those winding paths, assiduously cultivated, branches meeting overhead, grass beneath the feet, which in country estates are invariably designated "woodland walks." Shrubs tortured by the pruning-knife bordered the turf, and at every turn a seat was stationed by a tree.

On one of these seats sat a widow-lady, without exception the prettiest little woman I have ever seen, whose sombre dress suited her to perfection. I recognized her in a moment. Old Time during twenty years had stolen a few of her beauties, only to replace them by others; the fair hair had not lost its golden light; the eyes, though worn, had gained in expression; the sensitive mouth, which had smiled too often and too much, had become

pathetic ; the dark lashes rested upon cheeks as perfect in contour though less rounded. Notwithstanding the difference between girl and woman, it was not difficult to recognize in Lady Mary Marleigh the Mary Lumley whose broken vow had driven the major far from Cliffe.

The hand which should have worn his wedding-ring lay upon her knee ; she was gazing at the golden circlet which had pledged her faith to another, and I saw she had been crying. That is the way of the world. We human beings make our own misfortunes and then lament them.

I had barely time to remember the awkwardness of the situation before Jack saw her. She sprang to her feet with a low cry ; in another instant he was clasping both her little hands in welcome.

Jilted ! Forsaken ! His hopes ruined—his ambition killed by her infidelity, and the man was gazing at her face, and murmuring so low that I could scarcely hear the words.

“Mary ! have courage. I fear I startled you !”

“Startled me ? Oh, Jack, I was thinking of you. Have you ever forgiven me ?”

“Years ago, love—years ago.”

Luckily Fred and Margaret were out of sight ; I stole away through the bushes, it was not a scene for a third person. My friend had told me the truth, he had not proved hard to please. I recalled his weary tone—“All girls are alike to me now.” Yes, with him to have loved once was to have loved always.

I strolled back across the fields through the winter sunshine, wondering long at my own blind folly. To think that all the years I had known Jack Cliffe I had so mistaken his character. I had thought him unforgiving and cynical ! Yet, proud as I knew him to be, could he bear to listen to affectionate words from her whose falsehood had wrecked his life ? Could he help scorning her in his heart ?

Oh, that long, dreary day ! may it never be my fate to spend such another. The hours followed each other with laggard steps —four o'clock to five—five to six—and from six on till nine. Old John came in to know whether I would wait dinner for master. I answered yes, and throwing great lumps of coal upon the fire resigned myself to my fate.

Jack came at last, so softly that I did not hear him ; perhaps I had been dozing over my own reflections.

"Well, Cliffe," I exclaimed, "I thought you were never coming."

"I am sorry you waited for me—it was selfish to forget all about you, but I've been lost to every thought but one this evening. I know you'll wish me joy, Mildmay."

"So you are really engaged again to the girl who forsook you?"
Jack smiled as he answered me :

"I don't think I ever left off being engaged to her ; and as she is no longer a girl, but a woman who has known trouble, I must try and add comfort to love I never could have forgotten her, so all your trouble would have been in vain, Charlie, and December would have seen an unhappy bachelor flying from his home. You will help me make Cliffe gay for Christmas, won't you ? My wife must have everything bright about her."

But I persisted, roused into expressing my feeling somewhat bluntly :

"Do you mean to say you've forgiven her for jilting you ?"

Jack looked gravely at the fire and pondered deeply. I had expected to anger him, but he was evidently not displeased, only thoughtful. He sat silent so long that I thought he had forgotten my question, when he suddenly looked me full in the face and said :

"If she needs forgiveness, I can leave that to Heaven. She is in want of happiness, and I mean to give it her."

And this was the way my friend the major found a wife. I never knew him to be a very religious man, he wasn't in the habit of speaking about Heaven, but when he did he usually settled a point with it.

So the autumn passed away, and I never knew a man so changed—joyful, light-hearted, and at peace—his nature seemed to be freed from the coils of the demon sorrow. I never heard him make a cynical speech, or give one sneer at the world's expense. I believe there are some hearts for whom love alone is too dependent a passion, who need to feel it hallowed by a touch of pity. I believe that Jack's face when he brought his wife home to Cliffe was radiant with a happiness which could never have been as earnest in the days of his boyish romance.

My dear old friend ! his years of sorrow had passed into a life

of fireside joy, which no doubt could now assail, which no lover's tiff could mar.

The old deaf servants clustered in the hall to welcome their "young master's" bride. She took my hand and smiled at me through her tears.

"Major Mildmay, I hope you will give me a welcome too? I will try all my life to make up to Jack for—for—"

And then the sweet voice faltered, and she turned away to dry her eyes that he might not see her crying.

What a gay Christmas that was at Cliffe! My pen is quite unequal to the task of describing it—good old British cheer, home love, and universal good-will. I took my leave on New Year's day, and my friend the major said, with a great handshake:

"God bless you, Mildmay! You've helped to make me the happiest man in England."

I was certain it was no doing of mine, but I liked to be thanked for it, and by the next Christmas he possessed another cause for happiness—the deaf old servants clustered in admiration around a little "Master Jack."

Not much of a tale, is it? Only a life's love, cherished through sorrow, blossoming at last into the fairest of household flowers. May Heaven grant many a man a still more uneventful history—without the years of waiting, without the broken vows. Few would grumble at the absence of thrilling incident, I fancy.

Somehow Jack's wedding made me think seriously; he found such comfort himself in helping his wife to forget her former unhappy life that I envied him the power of consolation, and wished myself to guard some tender creature from sad memories of the dead past, and brighten her living future. I married soon, and settled down near the Clifffes. My wife talks very prettily, and is not always absorbed in worsted work—she does not spare her smiles either, and has learned to like the sunshine. Poor dear Margaret! how I misjudged her that day, and how often she thanks me for having delivered her from her "wicked, sulky misery," as she calls it. Bless the dear girl! for how much have I to thank her! Home sympathy, fireside comfort, and last, but not least, a baby girl. We have decided that when the child grows up she is to marry Jack's son.

From our windows I can see across the fields—the summer

shadows are lengthening on the turf—the sun is gliding slowly down the west, reluctant to leave old England—and on a distant lawn before a gabled house, I recognize the Clifffes, taking an evening stroll, arm in arm, he bending his tall figure as he gazes in her face.

He looks across the fields and waves his hat to me—I return our usual greeting—it is our “good-morning” and “good-night”—it means much which two men of the world do not care to speak to each other : it signifies a life-long friendship ; it embodies the simple prayer, “God bless my friend the major ! ”

Some Ways of the World: Bygone and Present.

NO. II.

By W. W. FENN.

THE Old Dover Road, or, as at its start from town it is called, the Old Kent Road, is another highway of the world familiar to me in youth. Most of the spots immortalized by Dickens on this, his favourite route, were well known to me, and it is always with no little interest that I come upon such passages in his works as touch on or describe them : Shooter's Hill, Dartford, Gravesend, past Gad's Hill, through Strood, Rochester and Chatham, and so on away by Sittingbourne, Faversham and Canterbury, etc. Especially did I, and do I still, follow David Copperfield in his escape from the degrading life he was made to pass in pasting labels on blacking bottles, etc., at Murdstone and Grimby's, to the home of his aunt, Miss Betsy Trotwood, at Dover, and where he arrived ragged and starved ! I knew most of the places on the road where his various adventures befel, particularly those in connection with the old Jew to whom he sold his waistcoat for fourpence at Chatham. Nor, I take it, am I singular in my sympathy with the hero's association with the well-known highway. He traversed it somewhat before my time, but the local colour had undergone little change when I, too, first tramped along it and reaped an experience of the long stage waggon on part of the route.

My father was a native of Faversham, so that I was led thither on many early occasions, and having exploring propensities used to ramble far afield. Once I walked away to, and far beyond, Sittingbourne, late on a summer's afternoon, and not until night began to fall was I reminded of the distance from home. I was very tired, and gladly availed myself of a waggoner's offer to give me a lift back in his vehicle, which I met on its way down to Dover. Thus I realized the truth of that well-known description of a night journey in a long stage waggon : "What a soothing way of travelling to lie inside that slowly moving mountain, listening to the tinkling of the horses' bells, the occasional smacking of the carter's whip, the smooth rolling of the great broad wheels, the rattle of the harness, the cheery

good-nights of passing travellers, jogging past on little short-stepped horses, all made pleasantly indistinct by the thick awning, which seemed made for lazy listening under, till one fell asleep. The very going to sleep, still with an indistinct idea, as the head jogged to and fro upon the pillow, of moving onward, with no trouble or fatigue, and hearing all these sounds like dreamy music, lulling to the senses, and the slow waking up, and finding one's self staring out through the breezy curtain, half opened in the front, far up into the cold bright sky with its countless stars, and downward at the driver's lantern dancing on like its namesake, Jack of the swamps and marshes, and sideways at the dark grim trees, and forward at the long bare road rising up, up, up, until it stopped abruptly at a sharp, high ridge as if there were no more road and all beyond was sky, and the stopping at the inn to bait, and being helped out, and going into a room with fire and candles, and winking very much, and being agreeably reminded that the night was cold, and anxious for very comfort's sake to think it colder than it was. What a delicious journey was that journey in the waggon.

"Then the going on again—so fresh at first, but shortly afterwards so sleepy. The waking from a sound nap as the mail came dashing past like a highway comet, with gleaming lamps and rattling hoofs, and vision of a guard behind standing up to keep his feet warm, and of a gentleman in a fur cap opening his eyes and looking wild and stupefied—the stopping at the turnpike, where the man was gone to bed, and knocking at the door until he answered with a smothered shout from under the bed-clothes in the little room above, and presently came down, night-capped and shivering, to throw the gate wide open and wish all waggons off the road except by day. The cold sharp interval between night and morning—the distant streak of light widening and spreading, and turning from grey to white, and from white to yellow, and from yellow to burning red—the presence of day, with all its cheerfulness and life—men and horses at the plough, birds in the trees and hedges, and boys in solitary fields frightening them away with rattles. The coming to a town—people busy in the markets; light carts and chaises round the tavern yard; tradesmen standing at their doors; men running horses up and down the street for sale; pigs plunging and grunting in the dirty distance, getting off with long strings at their legs,

running into clean chemists' shops and being dislodged with brooms by 'prentices ; the night coach changing horses, the passengers, cheerless, cold, ugly and discontented, with three months' growth of hair in one night—the coachman fresh as from a band-box, and exquisitely beautiful by contrast ; so much bustle, so many things in motion, such a variety of incidents—when was there a journey with so many delights as that journey in the waggon ? " Delights, alas ! to be succeeded by a painful discovery : I so enjoyed the journey between sleeping and waking throughout the night, that when at last I did awake for good—or bad, as it turned out—I found we had gone beyond Canterbury, and that consequently I was now even farther to the south of Faversham than at the start I had been at the north of it. Yes, I had overshot by many miles the corner at the head of the Faversham Mall where I ought to have got out.

However, it was now a lovely summer's morning, and except for the long walk, the scare I had given them at home by staying out all night, and the consequent wigging from the governor, no great harm was done, and as I look back I hug with satisfaction the thought that I have had my experience of such a rumbling ramble—an experience not easily obtained since the London, Chatham and Dover line has swept from off the road the long stage waggon, the mail coaches, and the rest of such characteristics of those bygone ways of the world.

Nevertheless sufficient remains, albeit mingled with those of this present year of grace, to make the old high roads well worthy of our ramblings, especially if, as in my case, the traveller has developed in later life a strong love for the beautiful in nature and antiquity. Very honestly, therefore, do I sympathize with a certain able writer on these matters when he says : " The railway is very far from being, in the main, so great an enemy to rural beauty and retirement as we are most of us disposed to consider it. It has destroyed, indeed, the grace and tranquillity of many an old town and village. Many an ancient 'High Street,' whose red tiled roofs, half-timbered walls and brick pavements used not long ago to slumber in the hot noon, with scarcely a sign of an inhabitant, has become the busy and incongruous main thoroughfare of an otherwise brand new town, of which the 'inns' are 'hotels,' the rows of new six or eight roomed edifices, 'Inkerman,' 'Alma,' 'Gladstone,' or 'Harting-

ton' Houses, and the labourers' cottages 'villas,' the sordid material of which is hidden and rendered impervious to rain by stucco facings, after Palladio or Brunelleschi. Nearly all the pleasant old towns and villages which lie within twenty-five miles of London, and which have been accommodated with railway stations, have undergone this change, as also are many of those which are at a much greater distance from the capital, and which first acquired the distinction of being stopped at by the trains of the great original lines. But as railway stations have become multiplied all over the country, they have proportionately ceased to become centres of attraction, there being only a certain amount of population to attract; and a new station now has little influence upon its neighbourhood, particularly when, as is commonly the case, the towns or villages and the stations are a mile or so apart.

"The lovers of country solitude and peace are well compensated for the damage which so many sequestered spots have suffered from railways, by the extra solitude and peace which many more have gained by the drainage of population to the railway towns; and although the near passage of a line of railway carriages is a horror to the eye, the distant view of a train, winding, like a many-jointed worm, through the valleys and across the plains, and setting its long track of white breath against the green woods and pastures, is a distinct and great gain to the landscape—an addition which, in a wide prospect, is scarcely less beautiful than those supreme elements of the picturesque, the winding river or the long arched aqueduct or viaduct; which latter itself is often an outcome of the railway, and is the making of more than one famous landscape; such as that of the Weald of Kent as seen from the coach road between Southborough and Tonbridge." In fact, nature has assimilated the railway; and great beauties have, as usual, asserted in this case also their kinship with great uses. Even the railway's ill-favoured sister, the electric telegraph, makes amends for its hideous presence along so many green road-sides by the æolian airs it gives forth in the lightest breeze; and it is to be hoped that, as we get used to them, the inherent ugliness of these endless files of black posts bound together by sagging wires will disturb the serenity of our country walks no more than the tranquillity of the swallows (who at certain times of year congregate along the wires, with their heads all looking one way,

to talk about their flight southwards) is troubled by the hasty and excited messages which are incessantly flashing beneath their toes. When, however, all is said that can be said for the electric telegraph in its artistic aspects, I cannot but think that its ugliness is too great to be tolerated by man or nature, and that ere long it will be found out that this skeleton may be safely and advantageously buried in the earth whose face it now deforms ; and deforms, if possible, the more for the consciousness we have of the mystic life which is always flying through its motionless frame with the speed of spirit.

"The greatest gain for which the lover of the country has to thank the railways is the transfer which has been made by them of the old coach roads from the purposes of prose and business to those of poetry and pleasure. While business men—including the restless multitudes who make their pleasure business, seeking rather to lose themselves in change of agitation than to renew their lives in leisure and repose—are hurried along the flattest and dullest lines of transit that can be chosen, at a rate and with noise and shaking which prevent their seeing anything when anything is to be seen, the true lover of the country remains in undisputed possession of thousands of miles of fine road, so beautiful, solitary, and strangely haunted by hints of a past time, that the quiet traveller in phaeton, or on foot, horse, or bicycle, seems to find himself in a sort of endless faëry-land laid out with lavish art and labour for the sole satisfaction of his pleasant idleness. He may drive, ride, or walk ten miles on one of these noble causeways, and never meet or pass even a cart or a drove of cattle. The old posting towns and villages at which he rests are filled with an almost supernatural quiet ; and each has one or more spacious inns which are at his solitary disposal, as is the great range of stabling at that of his cob, if he has one. The dreamy dwellers in these places seem mostly to have forgotten whither the great roads which traverse them lead. I paused the other day where a main road forked, to ask where the road on the right hand led to ; and the pretty and innocent young woman of whom I made the inquiry answered, 'To the beershop, sir.' A tender melancholy is the *sauce piquante* of beauty ; and this feeling lingers everywhere about these roads and their inhabitants, and to this feeling, in the posting-stations especially, the rude and prosperous merriment of past days has given place. Of real

decay and of poverty amounting to hardship, they somehow show no signs ; though it is sometimes difficult to understand how this is. Hurst Green, for example, which is the old posting-station between Tunbridge Wells and Hastings, is little more than an assemblage of large inns, spacious stable yards and smithies ; but though everything is as quiet as if in a trance, all the inns and smithies are open, and stand contentedly waiting for the guest, the horse, or the job which never seems to come. A ham and a cold fowl or sirloin will probably be forthcoming from the larder of 'The George' at your demand for luncheon, and you will find no savour of antiquity about them ; and the ostler will promptly appear at the sound of your horse's hoofs in the yard, and will take him from you with as much *nonchalance* as if the advent of a traveller were a common occurrence.

"These roads generally follow the most picturesque tracts of country, as the railways take the dullest. If there be a long ridge of hills anywhere from which the beauties of half a dozen counties can be seen at once, the road will go out of its way to run along the top of it, and no valley is too deep to be dived into for a sight of its river or moated house. Everything about an old road is human and civilized. The adjacent timber has been planted, ages ago, with reference to it ; farm-houses, hamlets and gentlemen's mansions cherish its companionship ; whereas the railway darts from one dull station to another through tracts of absolute desert ; and if it happens to come upon a piece of country sufficiently sensational to attract the suffering traveller's notice, it will probably dive under it like a mole before he can say, 'Look !'

"The desertion of these roads by their ancient traffic has given their now rare wayfarers a personal interest in each other. Rencontres between pedestrians in these solitudes seem to justify and even call for mutual recognition and a word or two about the weather. If a lonely cavalier, cyclist or walker is passed by a bright barouche full of ladies from the neighbouring 'Place,' he continues his journey with a sense of having been in contact with the 'quality,' and should you see a young lady on foot and pushing her tricycle up a hill a mile long, with her brother or lover a furlong ahead—as he frequently is in such cases—you may offer your services without danger of being thought rude, except by the gentleman who has forfeited his right to interfere.

It is curious that the old coach roads are commonly much better kept up now than their uses are for the most part poetical, than they were when they were the arteries of the country's busy life. I can remember posting from Tunbridge Wells to Hastings before there was any railway, and when the turnpike charges formed nearly half of the cost of so travelling. The roads were, for the most part, beds of loose sand, 6 in. or 8 in. deep, and it was killing work for the horses. The other day I drove the whole distance easily in three hours and a half, excluding luncheon time at Hurst Green, over roads which were throughout as smooth and sound as those of a royal park."

There are not many left whose experience covers that stretch of time embracing the reign of William IV. and that which brings us down to this present latter part of Queen Victoria's. But, nevertheless, such an one has only lately retired from his active official duties in the person of Mr. Moses Hobbs, and all who are interested in the ways of the world, bygone and present, should thank him for the little book in which are recorded many of his lively adventures on the road during a period of fifty-six or seven years. He, indeed, can tell a good deal about the altered condition of the roads, not only in their general aspect and surroundings, but in their actual making and maintenance. The deep sandy ruts or the utter sloughs of treacherous mud and slush which in earlier days described the state of many a highway, have in his time merged into the splendid macadam which the modern wayfarer on two wheels or four now only knows. It is, however, with what may be called the more human side of his life that his readers will find the chief attraction in the little work ; his perils and escapes, his daring efforts to perform punctually the offices with which as mail guard he was entrusted, they are, that form the great charm of his pages. For instance, once, while acting as guard of the Exeter mail, his driver, who was not quite sober, fell from his box and was killed. Mr. Hobbs tried to stop the horses, which started off at a gallop, but was unable to recover the reins, and in climbing back to his seat tumbled from the roof of the coach with no worse results than a sprained ankle and a few bruises. He was picked up by another coach, on which he travelled to the next stage, when he resumed his journey, for the runaway horses had taken the driverless coach on without injury. During the floods of 1852, Mr. Hobbs found

himself in a serious predicament. He had dismounted from the coach on a dark night and waded into the water up to his armpits to find the road for the driver, to whom he called to follow him. The driver came on accordingly, but did not stop to pick Mr. Hobbs up, and he remained three hours in the water, afraid to move lest he should get out of his depth. At last, by a desperate effort, he struggled on to Gloucester, where he was put to bed between warm blankets. Another time, in descending the road over Plinlimmon, coach, horses, passengers, driver and guard fell sixty feet down a precipice, in a terrible snowstorm, into a snowdrift. The passengers who were inside were cut by the broken glass, and two of the horses were killed, but, owing to the depth of the snow, the driver and guard escaped with a severe shaking. These incidents do not exhaust Mr. Hobbs' experiences. He ascribes his freedom from injury to his careful observation of his father's advice, "Never to injure his own health by drinking other people's." He left the road in 1854, when the Gloucester and Aberystwith coach ceased running, and after acting as a mail guard on the Great Western Railway for seven years, was stationed at Paddington in 1861, where he remained until his recent retirement.

In 1832 or thereabouts, when the great Reform Bill was agitating the whole community, railroads of course were but dreams of the fanatic; but in commenting on that epoch twenty years later, a popular journal described the efforts of Whiggism to convert itself into Liberalism, as "like the attempt of an old mail coachman or guard to turn stoker." In 1855 the coaching age had not long given up the ghost in the face of the increasing success and widening extension of railroads. Under these circumstances the writer chose his simile with discrimination when penning the sentence which we have just quoted. What would he say, however, had he read lately that "the last of the old mail guards is about to disappear from the service of the Post Office?" Fifty-six years have passed since Mr. Hobbs was selected to undertake the duties of guard of one of the royal mails. With a view to protecting the sacrosanct vehicle, its passengers and letter-bags from the assaults of marauding highwaymen, Mr. Hobbs was entrusted by the Postmaster-General with a long tin horn and a blunderbuss. What a world of suggestion is summed up in these few simple words!

Fifty-six years since King William IV. was on the throne, and gas had not long been introduced into the Metropolis and other big cities. Those who were schoolboys about 1835, and whom Time the Destroyer still spares, will remember what was meant by a long journey on the top of a mail coach which carried them by day and night, almost without stopping, to their distant destination. About that time the rivalry between four or five of the principal English highways was so keen that the rural residents upon each were always ready to claim that their road was, like the Appian Way of ancient Rome, "*regina viarum*"—"the queen of highways." In the eyes of Yorkshiremen, for instance, the Great North Road from London to York seemed to be more interesting and better constructed than "that *chef d'œuvre* of the immortal Telford"—as Mr. Birch Reynardson calls it—along which the Holyhead mail ran, covering two hundred and sixty-one miles between London and the Welsh coast in twenty-seven hours.

It was but the other day that the second Viscount Combermere passed away in his seventy-second year. In a racy letter from the pen of "Paul Pry," which appeared in the *Sporting Magazine* just sixty years since, we read that on a winter night in 1832 the first Lord Combermere, better known as Sir Stapleton Cotton, the dashing cavalry officer of the Peninsular War, was to be seen at two o'clock in the morning, prepared to take his seat beside Cracknall, the coachman of the Birmingham Tantivy, in whose honour the lately deceased Mr. Egerton Warburton wrote his brilliant ode, "The Tantivy Trot."

"Now for Leeds, Glasgow, Edinburgh, Birmingham, Holyhead, Chester, Liverpool," shouts, according to "Paul Pry," the little thick-set porter at the "Peacock," Islington, as one after another the north country mails dash up to the door, allowing the coachman and guard enough time to drain their "bottoms of brandy" and the passengers to shake themselves down before the long, cold journey commences.

"Any room for us?" shout a band of midland country graziers, who eye the more fortunate occupants of top seats with bitter disappointment.

"The box for Lord Combermere," says the crack coachman of the Tantivy, as the red-wheeled, red-panelled drag pulls up, the cynosure of every eye, at the "Peacock." His lordship, the

very beau-ideal of his class, proudly takes his seat by Cracknell's side. They are off, and before a dozen miles are surmounted, the old cavalry soldier learns that even war, with nights habitually passed, as the French say, *à la belle étoile*, has few hardships which require more fortitude and endurance than the box seat of a mail coach on a bitter cold night.

"Now, sir, time to get up," exclaims Boots at the "Peacock," on a November morning, to the little Tom Brown of Judge Hughes's ever-green tale. Punctual to the moment, the Tally Ho pulls up at the door as the clock strikes 3 a.m. "The young gentleman for Rugby" climbs to his place on the back seat, with the guard—a contemporary and, perhaps, a friend of Mr. Moses Hobbs—facing him. "I sometimes think," continues Judge Hughes, "that boys of this generation must be a deal tenderer fellows than we used to be. At any rate they are more comfortable travellers, for I see every one of them with his rug over his knees, keeping up the caloric in snugly-padded railway carriages." On the other hand, little Tom Brown, before he travels half a dozen miles, is unconscious whether he has any legs or feet. Cold has so benumbed his lower limbs that all sensation departs, and when the morning breaks they are thirty-five miles on the road, and the near approach of breakfast gladdens every heart. A bright fire gleams through the red curtains of the bar window as the Tally Ho pulls up at the front door, which is wide open.

"Now, sir," says the guard to little Tom, "just you jump down and take a drop of something to keep out the cold." In an instant the strangely-contrasted pair are before the bar, where a neat maid plies them with early purl, which sets Tom coughing as he never coughed before. In the front parlour stands a long table covered with the whitest of cloths. It bears a cold pigeon pie, a Yorkshire ham, a round of boiled beef, and a loaf of household bread on a wooden trencher. In an instant the stout old waiter enters the low-browed room, puffing under a tray laden with kidneys and a steak, rashers of bacon and poached eggs, buttered toast and muffins, coffee and tea, all smoking hot. Tom falls to with a will. In his biographer's words, "he puts away kidneys and pigeon pie, and imbibes coffee until his skin is as tight as a drum." Presently he walks majestically forth, and takes stock of the horses with a connoisseur's eye. Out comes the burly coachman, licking a tough-looking black cheroot, three

whiffs of which would knock any one else out of time. It is a pleasant picture of old coaching days, one that Washington Irving might have written, and in which Mr. Dolby records that Charles Dickens took great delight.

Strange as it may seem to younger generations, Mr. Moses Hobbs must have witnessed such scenes many scores of times. Lord Rosebery once remarked to a friend that in Lady De Ros, who died last autumn, and in the still living Sir Austin Henry Layard, we possess two veterans whose experiences carry us back almost to the Dark Ages. Has not Lady De Ros related, in *Murray's Magazine*, that just before Waterloo she was often permitted by the Iron Duke to ride his famous charger, Copenhagen, who, being short of work, kicked her off in the suburbs of Brussels? Has not Sir Austin Henry Layard recorded, in the *Quarterly Review*, that he was lurching sixty years since with Lord Beaconsfield's father at No. 1, Bloomsbury Square, when a hurried messenger entered the room and announced that "Ben had again been arrested for debt?" Few readers will fail to recognize in "Ben" the future Prime Minister and head of the Conservative party. Equally anomalous does it seem that an official should be living who remembers the "moving accidents by flood and field" which awaited the mails when as yet railways were almost unknown, and when Sir Walter Scott was posting from Abbotsford to London, and spending four days and four nights on the road, while Sydney Smith was journeying in his own carriage from London to Combe Florey, in Somersetshire, "and living," as he puts it himself, "for three days on veal cutlets and waiters." "The Road" afforded much enjoyment to those who travelled a short way on a fine midsummer day; but a journey, say, from London to Edinburgh, when the glass was below zero and the north wind blew pins and needles, must be experienced before its terrors could be gauged.

Finally, it is not a little curious that, just as Mr. Hobbs's memory is being jogged—as it doubtless will be—by old lovers of coaching days, there is a revival of "The Road" in the shape of packet post vans drawn by four horses, tooled by a coachman, and with a guard behind. It is a striking illustration of the old maxim, "*On revient toujours à ses premiers amours.*"

A Buried Sin.

CHAPTER XIII.

CLAIRE'S FAITH.

HAVING placed the letter in Claire's hand Mr. Watson would have left the room, but at a sign from Mrs. Blaine he remained. She dreaded the effect the communication might have upon Claire, and felt that he, being an old friend of the family and cognizant of every point in the family history, might help them through this crisis by the strength of his presence and good counsel. Silence, painful, waiting silence, held them breathless as Claire gravely read the letter through ; she made no outward or visible show of emotion, no hysterical outburst. Having got to the end, she turned back to the first page and went through it again. Then she looked up, and, quoting from the letter, said quite calmly :

" My father says, ' I will never show a felon's face at Knaresborough ! I will never return till my good name is restored to me, and my fame cleared from the wicked slander that sent me from my home a broken, despairing man. I have lived through my cruel sentence, and now wait God's time.' " After a momentary pause she added, " Explain, please—tell me what this means ? "

There could be no beating about the bush, no puerile preliminaries now. They had to deal with no emotional, hysterical girl ; Claire had developed with strange suddenness into the woman. They realized the position at once—she meant to know the bare naked facts of the case of which her father's letter had already given her an inkling. With as much delicacy and tenderness as the occasion allowed, they told her the miserable story of the trouble that had overwhelmed them in the long ago. If they attempted to clothe the ugly skeleton with excuses, or bring forward extenuating circumstances, she resented it, saying with an impatient frown :

" Don't try to soften things—there is no need for you to make excuses as though you were talking of a guilty person—you are

speaking of *my father*, who is not guilty ; God tells me so, and God will help me to set him right. I only want to know why he was accused, and on what evidence he was found guilty—tell me only that."

She kept them to the point, and would not let them wander an inch out of the way for either comment or remark. When Mr. Watson spoke it was with clear logical sense, dwelling solely on the legal, not at all on the sentimental aspect of affairs. He was most kindly considerate and sympathetic to Claire, as her aunt and grandmother were tender and affectionate ; but she felt with indignation and bitterness that not one of them shared her feelings respecting her father—their reticence and non-expression of belief in his innocence indicated to her that they believed him guilty of what was laid to his charge. Such a multiplicity of feelings agitated her mind and tangled her heart's affections—she felt as though she had loved and trusted and eaten the bread of *his* enemies for all these years ; she was angry with herself, with them, and with all the cruel world that had ranged itself against him ! All her heart and soul went out in the one great yearning to be with him, to comfort and cheer him, leaving all the rest of the world behind her.

"I suppose you meant well," she said, regarding them with reproachful eyes ; "but it was cruel to let me live in ignorance—to let me be gay and happy—to wear my pretty dresses"—she plucked at her sleeve as though she would tear it off—"while he, my own dear father, was wearing sackcloth—chained to a gang perhaps of thieves and murderers—working, enduring, suffering untold miseries ; and you have been silent—never heeding his miserable degradation—enjoying the world, and never lifted your voice or stretched a hand to help him !" Her eyes, full of indignant fire, flashed upon her aunt and grandmother as she spoke, and Mrs. Thurlowe, who could ill bear the reproaches which in her heart she felt were not undeserved, said with some touch of resentment :

"We did all we could at the time, had the best legal advice, moved heaven and earth to prove that he was innocent of the crime he was charged with ; but we could not do it ; the facts were too strong against him, and we were forced against our will to accept the verdict."

"You are his mother !" exclaimed Claire ; "he was your own

flesh and blood—yet you believed him guilty—that was the worst of all!"

"My own flesh and blood is neither fireproof nor sin-proof. Justice and truth stand first and foremost above all the world—if your right eye offend you, pluck it out, saith the Scripture—and according to the Scripture I act."

"And let your son, your only son, go condemned by the law, condemned by his mother's heart!" exclaimed Claire, "without a word of faith, hope, or comfort to cheer him through his long wretched exile! No wonder he will not come back to face his people when their hearts are so hard against him."

"You are mistaken, Claire; though we condemn the sin, we love the sinner. Whenever he comes back, we shall receive him with open arms, and forget and forgive all that has gone by."

"Forget and forgive!" repeated the girl scornfully; "it is for *him* to forget and forgive—not *you*! You would receive him as a returned criminal—a repentant sinner! not as the misjudged, cruelly used man and martyr that he is."

"You have been taken by surprise, and are hot, angry and unjust, Claire," exclaimed Mrs. Blaine. "Whatever our belief, the terrible facts were forced upon us. You know temptation sometimes assails the wisest and best of men, and for one moment's fall they pay the expiation of a life. For my part, as my mother knows, I was never quite convinced—I have always doubted—thought there might be some strange mystery which Harold might explain——"

"That's better," rejoined Claire; "it is something to give your brother the benefit of a doubt, but——"

"My dear young lady," said Mr. Watson, now hastening to put in his word, "I think you are both unreasonable and unjust. What is the use of digging up a long buried skeleton? The past is past; we have the present and the future to look to; that will give us work to do. I quite understand and sympathize with your filial affections, my dear child; so I am sure do we all; but you must not let your feelings on one side lead you astray on another. I think you overlook one thing: however unfortunate family matters may have been, your relations here have shown their respect and sympathetic affection for your father by the loving care and guardianship of *you* for all these years."

He had touched the right chord now. The memory of the

bright happy days passed under their care, from her childhood upwards came surging up from her heart, and filled her eyes, for aunt and grandmother, on whom for the moment she had so harshly turned, had been most faithful and tender guardians, had indeed been father and mother and all to her, and had never let her know a cloud or a care. Tears rushed to her eyes now; she flung one arm round the neck of one, and stretched out her hand to the other, and said sweetly:

"Please forgive me. All this has come upon me with such terrible suddenness that even now I can hardly believe—but there!" she added quickly, "don't let us talk of it, but think of what is to be done. Of course my dear father must come home."

"Which you see by his letter he positively declines to do," said Mr. Watson, repeating some extracts, and so he shifted the conversation from the painful part of the subject, and brought legal and other matters under discussion, leaving the sentimental portion quite out of the question. After wasting a great many words, as people do in almost every discussion, they separated the chaff of useless suggestions from the grain of practical common-sense, and it was decided, to their mutual satisfaction, that Mr. Watson should make immediate arrangements to go himself to California (so much more may be done in a day's talk than a month's writing), have an interview with Harold Thurlowe, and endeavour to persuade him to return, and, failing in that, should obtain such legal powers as would enable his next-of-kin to deal with the estates, etc. At this suggestion Claire brightened, and said:

"Of course that is the best thing to be done, indeed the one thing that ought to be done; and *I* shall go with you, Mr. Watson."

"You!" they exclaimed simultaneously in amazement.

"Yes, why not?" replied Claire decidedly. "Please don't say anything against it, for I mean to go."

"Claire, Claire! you take away my breath," said Mrs. Blaine. "The idea of a girl like you taking such a journey, and *alone*, for it is impossible that either I or Grannie can go with you."

"Mr. Watson is going, and he will take care of me," persisted Claire. "I know it is a long and expensive journey, but papa will be rich now, you tell me, and Mr. Watson can therefore easily find the money for my expenses."

Mrs. Blaine looked from one to the other in amazed perplexity. Her only idea of travelling was the removing from town to country, perhaps to take a dip into North Wales, or a few days' run through the Isle of Wight ; once in her younger days she had crossed over to Ireland and made the regulation tour through the country ; that had been travelling enough to last her for the rest of her life. The idea of crossing the Atlantic, facing the storms and perils of the sea, then through thousands of miles of strange country, through mountainous regions and lonely lands, occupied —as her imagination pictured them !—by savages and wild beasts, seemed to her very moon-struck madness ; for, like all home-staying folk, she exaggerated the dangers and difficulties of the Light Continent. Although she *knew*, she failed to realize the fact that increasing thousands of tourists travel every day through these distant regions in all comfort and security. The difficulties to be encountered seemed to her insurmountable, especially for a girl like Claire, accustomed to the luxuries and comforts of a smooth, quiet home life. She raised her voice in feeble persuasion.

"I don't think you know what you are talking about, Claire. I see no necessity for your going at all ; indeed I think it is a most foolish proceeding. Mr. Watson can transact all the business and bring back all the news. You have no idea what an ocean voyage is ! I would never venture to face the Atlantic ! and still worse, that dreadful overland journey, to say nothing of train wreckers and robbers ; the trains are always running off the track, and I hear that it is quite a common thing for people to be starved in snow-storms, and——"

"My dear lady," exclaimed Mr. Watson, "you are going a little too far. In these days the overland journey may be made as easily and pleasantly as a trip to Paris, and there are no snow-storms at this season. I quite sympathize with this dear girl's desire, and shall be delighted to take all such care of her as her father's old friend can."

"You encourage the notion," exclaimed Mrs. Blaine with uplifted brows. "I must say it seems to me contrary to all common-sense to take such a long troublesome journey. No practical good can come of it ; it is for mere sentiment's sake."

"That is exactly what it is, auntie," replied Claire ; "mere sentimental loving longing to see my dear father's face. But practical good will come of it too. For I shall bring him back with me,

I *know* I shall, and we shall find some way to make him stand as clear in the world's eyes as he stands in mine."

"What do you say, mother? You have not spoken at all," said Mrs. Blaine.

"Nothing," she answered; "Claire was always self-willed! If I were to oppose her going, she would be more firmly resolved to go. Nothing *I* could say would affect her."

"No, it would not indeed," said Claire, with sparkling eyes. "I don't like to seem disrespectful, grandmamma, but I shall never forgive you—*never*—for your unfaith in him—your son and my father!"

"Evidently respect for age has not formed part of your education, Claire," said Mrs. Thurlow somewhat sternly.

"People should be respected for what they *are*, and for what they *do*—not because they are old—which is no merit of theirs!—people can't help getting old. But when is the earliest, the very earliest time we can start?" she inquired, addressing Mr. Watson, who left the family discussion as much as possible to the ladies themselves, and was not sorry to talk over the more practical matters.

Mrs. Blaine brought forward a few more of what she called common-sense views, but all to no purpose. Both aunt and grandmother felt that Mr. Watson silently approved and supported Claire, which they were rather surprised that he, a practical legal mind, should do. There was no time to be wasted in arguments. This was Thursday, and Mr. Watson thought he might be able to arrange his business so as to start by the "City of Rome" on the following Wednesday. It was finally arranged that Claire should spend the intervening days with Mrs. Watson, who, like her husband, was an old friend of the family, and, under her chaperonage and guided by her judgment, should do her shopping and make the necessary preparations for the voyage.

Mrs. Blaine was quite content with this arrangement, as she was herself as ignorant as a baby of the requirements and the hundred and one trifles that make the sum total of one's comfort on such occasions; and Mrs. Watson was American born, though she had lived many years in England, and had been accustomed to constantly cross the Atlantic, visiting her old home and relatives. She thought no more of the voyage than ordinary mortals think of a visit to the Isle of Wight. She knew all the

petty details connected with travelling, and was just the right person to superintend and advise Claire in making her purchases.

"You are very kind and considerate in thinking of us," said Mrs. Blaine, addressing Mr. Watson; "but you are quite sure it will be quite convenient to Mrs. Watson to receive Claire? You know we are making a heavy demand upon her time as well as on her hospitality. Of course I will write to her at once, but there is no time for the passing of letters to and fro. What is to be done must be done at once."

"Of course," rejoined Mr. Watson, "and we shall be able to arrange things easily enough. If you decide that things shall be as we have proposed, I will telegraph to my wife at once, and she will be happy to receive Claire and make things smooth and pleasant for her. Women love to have a hand in their friends' affairs, and I am sure she will delight in going about with Claire and helping her to her travelling dresses and all other necessaries. She knows exactly what will be required, and she will enjoy managing for Claire as much as managing for herself. If you can put me up I will stay here to-night, and take Claire back with me by an early train to-morrow." He started for the Telegraph Office; Claire went upstairs and rushed into Ruth's room. It was unusual for the girls to burst in upon Ruth so unceremoniously; and from Claire's whirlwind-like entrance and excited face, she judged that something had happened, and she also knew it must be connected with that one matter which at that time filled all their hearts. She pushed her writing away and turned to Claire.

"Well, dear?" she said interrogatively.

"Ruth," exclaimed Claire, almost sobbing with agitation, "I am going to California to fetch papa." Seeing the look of amazed incredulity that came into Ruth's face, she added, "Yes, it is quite true. I am going with Mr. Watson. We start next Tuesday." She nestled down by Ruth's side as she added in a low voice as though she did not like to hear herself speak, "They have told me *everything*; all the cruel story about papa—why he went away, and why he won't come back—you know? Have you known always?"

"Yes, always," she answered, smoothing the girl's hair with sympathetic affection. "I was at Knaresborough all the time! all that terrible time! and, Claire darling, when they found him guilty, I left my home, and came to Mrs. Blaine, and, as you

know, have made my home here and been with you all ever since."

"Ah!" exclaimed Claire eagerly, "let me look in your face. I think, though, I can tell by your voice—you knew my dear father? You *knew him*, and *you* don't believe——"

"No, Claire, no," she answered, interrupting her quickly and emphatically. "I never believed him guilty—never! I believe in his truth and honour as I do in my own soul, in spite of all the evidence and the law's decision. I feel he did not—he could not have committed the crime laid to his charge."

"Thank God! thank God!" exclaimed Claire with great emotion, "there is *one* in this wide world to do him justice. I am glad it should be *you*; but *they*, his own mother and sister," she added bitterly, "are both against him."

"No, Claire, no; not both; your aunt always took his part."

"In a milk and watery sort of way," rejoined Claire.

"And as for your grandmother, Claire, she is a proud stern woman, and—she never loved Harold overmuch! Your aunt Anna was her favourite. The boy was too like his father, and they never got on very well together. He was a little wild and wayward, perhaps extravagant in his early days, and she could not make allowance for his high spirits; then his marriage, with its accompanying vexations, angered and distressed her; then he was in difficulties when the charge was brought, and she was enraged, maddened, by the thought that *he, her son*, should drag his name in the mire, and stain it by such a crime as that. It was bad enough to be accused; that in her eyes was a crime in itself—but to be condemned! and she was one of those narrow-minded people who believe in the infallibility of the law. Did they tell you everything? All the details, Claire?" she inquired anxiously.

"They told me the one cruel fact; that was enough," said Claire. "But he will come back; you will be glad to see him?"

"Yes, indeed," she answered fervently.

"And, there is a mystery somewhere—some truths that have been hidden away somewhere, and never brought to light. Ruth darling, you believed in my father, and have always been so good to *me*—and you will help me now! Shut your eyes and go back through all those years, and live through the old days over again. Tell me everything—every trifle. I may find some clue

in the smallest thing, and if I only get the faintest clue, you will help me, and we will unravel the wrong-doing, and let my dear father lift his head and look the world squarely in the face once more."

"I will do what I can." Ruth's face was very pale now. She seemed indeed the more distressed of the two. "But did they tell you, Claire, that it was *my* father who gave the weightiest evidence against *yours*?"

"Oh, Ruth," said Claire, and kneeling by her side she gazed searchingly into Ruth's eyes, and suddenly the tears rushed blindingly into her own, and she broke down into sobs. "Oh, poor Ruth! dear—poor—dearest Ruth!" and even Ruth's self-command gave way, and the two were locked, crying heartily, in each other's arms.

CHAPTER XIV.

HER WILL AND HER WAY!

FROM the moment that the announcement of these projected doings was put in circulation, there seemed to be a moral earthquake, and general upheaval of everything in the household. Dolly was almost as much excited about Claire's impending departure as Claire herself, and went with her heart and soul in her plans and purpose. Not a word of opposition fell from Dolly's saucy lips now. She was all on Claire's side, and the most tender and sympathetic of friends. She exercised her vivacious tongue, and devoted her energies to making things bright and pleasant for Claire, during her last few hours at The Friars. She cleared the atmosphere of all gloomy forebodings in which the elder ladies were inclined to indulge; and if an attempt was made to discuss any vexed question or embarrass Claire's movements, her ready wit fired off a volley of fun-pointed arrows, and silenced the enemy on the spot.

The sun of hope shone through the cloud which had at the first shock shadowed Claire's spirit, and every moment she grew stronger in the faith that in her hands lay the clearing of her father's name. She could not tell how at the moment, but instinct and filial devotion told her it was to be done; the way and the means would be shown to her in time, and her face, which had been so white and woe-begone, was soon aglow with hope

and love. The idea that Mr. Levison, Ruth's father, and the trusted friend of the family, had, in any way, by giving compulsory evidence or not, been concerned in bringing about the conviction of her father was a perplexity and a pain to her. She was in too great a whirl of excitement at present to be able to think of things calmly ; one thought got tangled with and crossed by another, amalgamating in a confused mass in her brain ; but when she got to sea, during the quiet monotony of the voyage, she would have time to put her thoughts in order and decide on some plan of future action ; then she could talk things over with Mr. Watson, and she was sure he would give her all the information and assistance in his power. One thing, however, was plain to her : she had great reliance upon Ruth's clear-sightedness and judgment, and had hoped to secure her as an ally, that they might together work out the redemption of her father from the dishonour that bound him ; but since Mr. Levison's name had been brought forward she could hardly expect Ruth to join her in any course whereby her own father might become unpleasantly involved, for though he was not a model parent and there was small sympathy or intimacy between them, still he was her father ; there was no doing away with that fact ; and the ties of flesh and blood are not to be easily loosened. Well, this was all matter for further consideration ; there was little time for either thinking or talking just now. The family were all busy arranging for Claire's departure the next morning, when she and Mr. Watson were to leave The Friars and so take the first step on their "outward bound" journey.

Mrs. Blaine and Dolly would very much have liked to accompany Claire on her visit to London, for Mrs. Watson had answered her husband's telegram by another inviting the family to take up their abode there for the next few days ; but Mrs. Blaine felt it would be taking undue advantage of her almost enforced hospitality to inflict *three* guests upon her. Besides, there was so much to be done, and the whole family conclave could hardly go shopping together—the one would embarrass the movements of the other ; so it was at length decided that Mrs. Blaine and Dolly were to go to London in time for luncheon at Mrs. Watson's on Monday, and down to Liverpool on the Tuesday, sleeping there one night, and seeing the party off on Wednesday.

The next morning, Friday, Mr. Watson and Claire left The

Friars, not, however, before the two girls had taken advantage of a few minutes' leisure, when they were quite alone, for a brief confidential talk together.

"What are you going to do about Algernon, Claire?" inquired Dolly. "Surely you will let him know. What will he think? You must give him some reason for your running off to America in this sudden way."

"I shall write to him as soon as I get to town," answered Claire, "and of course see him and tell him *everything*."

"Everything! Oh, Claire! why need you do that?" exclaimed Dolly. "Surely you are not bound to tell *him* what has been kept secret even from *us* for all these years—it will be too humiliating for us *all*!"

"Most of all to *me*," replied Claire. "But that can't be helped; it has got to be done. You don't suppose I *like* doing it, Dolly? I think the truth, the plain honest truth, is always best to be told, and I shall conceal *nothing* from Algy; it is not right I should. I think it is only fair to him as well as to myself that he should know."

"Claire, darling, think what you are doing," said Dolly, very earnestly for her. "Under the circumstances, I am sure you are justified in keeping silence. Algernon Kent has nothing to do with Uncle Harold's affairs."

"Perhaps not in a general way," replied Claire; "but in a matter like this he has everything to do. A man has a right to know *anything* that touches the good name of the girl he marries; and *mine* is darkened by the shadow of my dear father's trouble—what they *call* his 'crime'—but that he is not guilty I would stake my life!" Her face glowed with the faith that was so strong in her heart, as she added, "Do you think God would have let me be happy all these years if my father had been a *real* criminal? I should have known it; God would in some way have put that knowledge in my heart."

"But He didn't, Claire," observed Dolly.

"No, because it isn't true," she answered eagerly.

"And He has let you be happy all these years, even while my uncle was suffering. Innocent he may be, but he has paid the penalty just the same as if he had been guilty. For my part I think it is much worse to suffer for another man's sin than for your own, Claire. If you had known your father was innocent

and suffering, you would have been more miserable than if you had known he was guilty."

"Please let it rest ; you don't understand," exclaimed Claire irritably. "Just now you were talking of Algy."

"Yes," replied Dolly ; "for your own sake, Claire, I advise you to keep silence about this miserable story. If you really cared for Algy you would not run the risk of losing him. Men are queer creatures, and when he knows he mayn't want to marry you any more—he may give you up."

"Of course that is why I tell him," replied Claire. "I hope we shall both be willing to give one another up. Anything else is impossible now."

"Why, Claire, what lukewarm affections you must have ; and you seemed so dead gone on one another too ! If you really cared you *couldn't* talk in such a way."

"Can't you understand that it is because I care for him so much that I am willing to part with him ?" said Claire flushing deeply. "There is no other course open to us. How could I look into his true honest eyes, and feel I had this ugly secret hidden in my heart ? take his good name in exchange for my tainted one ? It would be like leading him into a pit blindfold, to wake up and find himself covered with the slime of infamy and disgrace—to find, instead of the bright happy girl he fell in love with at The Friars, he had married a convict's daughter."

"You take a gloomy, pessimistical sort of view of things," said Dolly. "Depend upon it, things will settle down all right when my uncle comes home. There is all the difference in the world between a rich man and a poor one. People will forget all about the past—if they have not forgotten already."

"I wonder they have let us remain in ignorance so long," exclaimed Claire, struck suddenly by the thought. "Why, of course it must have been a public scandal a dozen years ago ! Everybody knew, yet nobody ever hinted it to us. It must have seemed strange—odious—to have seen *me*, the daughter, dancing through the world happy and gay, while *he* was—— There ! I wonder some cruel tongue did not poison our lives with a whisper of the truth."

"Oh, come, Claire, people are bad enough, but not such unmitigated brutes as that. Many respectable parents may have

an ugly skeleton stowed away in the background somewhere. Besides, don't you remember now how we've dodged about from place to place and seemed to have so few old friends, and you and I have always been kept out of the way of Knaresborough people, and were sent abroad to school? But don't worry about what people may think now. I daresay they have forgotten all about uncle's unfortunate affair by this time."

"Whether they forget or whether they remember does not alter the case in the least," she answered. "Besides, people never forget anything bad. Good may be forgotten, evil never. I daresay things that happened so long ago may have faded from their memory, so many other things more startling and terrible have happened since; but his coming back, especially under such circumstances, will revive it. The better a man's position is, the more mud they will throw at him. No, I quite realize everything, Dolly. I know we shall have to drag through troubled waters, but all will come out bright and clear at last, only we must be patient and wait. That is why I am going to say good-bye to Algernon."

"You are very selfish, Claire. You don't think of the pain and disappointment you cause to *him*; and I think, considering that you are almost engaged to Algernon, he has a right to expect some consideration. I would rather bury a hundred secrets ten feet underground than run the risk of being separated from my George, especially when the telling them could be of no possible good."

Claire put her arms round her cousin and kissed her, saying:

"Dolly, dear, your tongue never does justice to your heart—your actions are always so much better than your words. I know, whatever happens, you will always *do* exactly what you think is right. We none of us can do more than that."

"Claire, dear," responded Dolly affectionately, "speak to mamma. Tell her what you are going to do before you leave."

"I will," said Claire; and she did so.

Mrs. Blaine raised no obstacle in the way of Claire's communicating the family trouble to Algernon Kent. Clearer-sighted and with more worldly experience than Dolly, she saw that it would have to be made known to him one day, for to a certainty Sir Harold Thurlowe's return would recall the memory of the old

troublous time, and it was as well to have the credit of doing the right thing—it was humiliating, but it couldn't be helped. She little knew that one silent neighbour had known the secret all along, and kept it even from the knowledge of her own sons!

The next morning, by an early train, Mr. Watson and Claire left The Friars. All the family, except Ruth, felt some doubt and misgiving as to the wisdom and result of the step Claire was taking. They had rather she had received their information as they believed she would, and let matters run their course without interference of hers. Not so Ruth. She would have been grievously disappointed had Claire acted otherwise than she was doing. She could not bid her "good-bye" and speak her last few words in the presence of the whole family, so she called Claire into her room and took leave of her there. Many cheering words of love and hope she whispered to her as she embraced her again and again.

"Come, Claire," exclaimed Dolly, bursting into the room, "the carriage is at the door, and you have only just time to catch the train."

A last loving embrace and Claire descended.

The trio of ladies were grouped at the open hall door. Mr. Watson was fussing around, patting the horses and seeing that the luggage and small baggage was properly arranged and nothing left behind—Mrs. Blaine dressed ready to go with Claire to the station and see her off by the train. Mrs. Thurlowe took leave of her granddaughter in her usual grim, unemotional manner. Claire whispered a few last words in her ear, and she answered :

"I pray it may end so. Give me the occasion and I will bend my stiff old knees to God for my son's sake more gladly than I have ever done for my own! But sink or swim, God bless you, child!"

Her thin lips touched the girl's cheek and she was gone.

Claire glanced up at Ruth's window. She was there, and as they drove away leaned out and waved her handkerchief, watching till the sound of the wheels died upon her ears and the carriage and its beloved occupants became a mere speck in the distance.

Arrived in London, the travellers drove at once to Mr. Watson's pretty house in Westbourne Street. Claire was received with

affectionate cordiality by Mrs. Watson, a kind, motherly woman, who was deeply interested in all the Thurlowe family, with whom her husband had been legally connected for so many years. Claire's position was calculated to win her most sympathetic interest, especially as she had known her father in his bright youth as well as in his darker manhood.

After the first greeting and settling down in her temporary home, Claire's first thought was to take Mrs. Watson into her confidence respecting her position in regard to Algernon Kent, and to request permission to invite him to the house next day for a final interview before she sailed for America. To this Mrs. Watson promptly acceded. It was, she said, the right thing to do.

Before Claire retired to rest that night she sat down and wrote to Algernon—only a brief note, asking him to come to Westbourne Street the next morning (Saturday), as she was in town for a few days, and was to sail for America on Wednesday morning next.

This letter was delivered to Algernon as he sat taking his ease at his bachelor breakfast the following morning. If a bomb had fallen at his feet and exploded in those quiet chambers of his he could not have been more surprised. The remainder of his breakfast was left untouched. He threw off his lounging jacket and flung on his coat, but, hurried as he was, he did not forget to consult his looking-glass to see that his hair and his necktie were all right, for, whatever the emergency, a man will not face the world with one disordered or the other awry.

In a very few minutes—indeed, almost in less time than it takes to write it—he was driving fast in the fastest hansom to Westbourne Street, greatly exercised in mind, and too bewildered to indulge in conjecture, only mentally ejaculating to himself the while, "Going to America ! Great heaven ! what can it all mean ? "

(*To be continued.*)

LONDON SOCIETY.

JUNE, 1892.

The Countess Pharamond.

(A SEQUEL TO "SHEBA.")

By "RITA,"

Author of "GRETCHEN," "THE LAIRD O' COCKPEN," "SHEBA," etc., etc.

Book III.

CHAPTER VI.

"FRIENDS OF LONG AGO."

MRS. LEVISON lost no time in acquainting Sheba with the facts of her visit to the Countess Pharamond, and laid great stress upon her condescension in coming to return it the following day.

The news was not very gratifying to Sheba. A wide gulf lay between that early friendship and its proposed resumption—a gulf too wide to be crossed by the girlish feet that had lost all the lightness of girlhood now.

"I would rather not see her," she said as Mrs. Levison ended the long harangue. Then suddenly all her composure gave way, and to her mother's astonishment she burst into passionate weeping. "Why won't you let me alone?" she cried. "Isn't my life hard enough? I only ask to live quietly, unseen, unknown, forgotten—as I deserve to be forgotten. . . . And that, even, is denied me."

"I'm sure I don't know why you should mind seeing Bessie. Why, you were almost like sisters once," stammered Mrs. Levison. She was a little terrified by this unwonted display of emotion. It was so strange, so rare for Sheba to give way before any one. But she could not guess at the torture the girl was undergoing—the sting of awakened memories, the passion and pain and humiliation that this meeting must inevitably recall.

When the next afternoon came in due course and she was summoned to receive her visitor, she at least had made no difference in her toilet, and entered the tiny sitting-room in her plain black

working gown, with a composure she was far from feeling. Dolly was there, gorgeously arrayed, and Mrs. Levison had also donned her second-best dress in honour of the occasion. Bessie herself wore a very simple gown of black cashmere and lace, whose elegance, however, lay in its perfect fit and suitability to the wearer. Sheba could not repress a start of astonishment as she looked at this tall, fair woman, with her magnificent figure, and her air of pride and composure. She was no more like the Bessie Saxton of West Shore than, perhaps, Sheba herself was like the girl with her flying mane of hair, who had dashed through the wilderness with her pet goat at her heels. One swift glance they gave each other, but in that glance Sheba knew that whatever had prompted this visit it was no recollection of the old girlish friendship—no desire to revive its dead ashes again. As for Bessie, her own feeling was relief—relief to find the girl she remembered changed now into this pale and weary woman.

Surely no dangerous rival was here. Whatever beauty of youth and colouring Sheba had once possessed, had departed with that youth. Love and happiness might give her back some portion of it, should they ever again be hers, but not the life she now led, with its endless drudgery and its dreary surroundings, and its utter lack of sympathy and companionship.

Bessie had sufficient worldly wisdom to hide her real feelings, and greeted Sheba with a warmth and cordiality that made Dolly envious. Sheba, however, responded very coldly to these advances. She distrusted the Countess Pharamond more than she had learnt to distrust her friend of the past, and absolutely refused to believe in the gushing warmth of that lady's protestations.

After a while Bessie grew impatient. "I want a chat with you alone, Sheba," she said. "Take me to your study and let me see where you work. It is interesting to find you have developed into a celebrated person. I was more than astonished when Dolly told me yesterday."

"My study is only a little box of a room," said Sheba reluctantly. She did not wish for a *tête-à-tête*, and shrank involuntarily from that re-opening of old wounds which it threatened. But Bessie was impatient of the restraint caused by the presence of the others, and insisted upon accompanying Sheba to her own precincts.

Once there, and the door closed, she could restrain herself no longer.

"I want you to tell me everything," she said. "I . . . I couldn't ask your mother. Remember, I heard nothing about you from the time you left home until about a year ago, and then I was told you were dead."

Sheba took the chair by the writing-table. Her face had grown very white and stern. "Don't think me unfriendly, Bessie," she said; "but I would rather not speak of that time. I . . . God help me—I *cannot!*"

She lost her self-restraint for a brief moment, and was only a girl again—sorrowful, trembling, abashed. But in the silence that followed, as those cold blue eyes took her in with such merciless scrutiny, she recovered strength and calmness.

"I suppose it must be very painful," said Bessie softly. "And you were so cruelly deceived," she added.

"No!" cried Sheba passionately, as she lifted her head and dashed the tears from her eyes with a quick intolerant anger at their self-betrayal. "Never that—you must not say it. I—I knew what I was doing."

The hot shamed flush that crept up to the roots of her thick dark hair spoke out its tale of weak and loving womanhood, and lent some of the old glow and fire to the changed face. Bessie looked at her curiously; conscious—as of old she had been conscious—that there was a charm beyond mere physical beauty—a charm intangible, indescribable—that might enchain a man's heart and keep his memory faithful, when all else had passed and been forgotten.

"If you knew that," she said, "had you no fear—no thought of what such a tie invariably brings as its result? Shame—neglect—desertion? You must have changed very much."

"I had no fear," said Sheba, lifting the proud serenity of her steady eyes to that coldly insolent face before her. "To love, such things are unknown. I have not suffered from any cause that you suppose. But . . . it is useless to talk of it. The world recognizes one course of action—and one result. I have nothing to do with the world."

"And what of him—of Paul?" asked Bessie. "Is all over? Have you parted for ever?"

"He thinks I am dead," said Sheba. "I . . . shall not un-

deceive him. The law of man has parted us . . . We must abide by it. Only"—and again that glow and radiance of her great love beautified the pale sadness of her face—"only, we can never forget—never. No law can undo our past memories."

A sharp cruel pang rent the heart of the woman who heard those words. Was there indeed so much in love? Had this girl, with her frank, innocent soul and her generous faith, learnt a higher and nobler truth than any worldly wisdom teaches? Was what that world calls degradation, really unknown and unfelt by a nature which gives all, trusts all, and fears nothing?

All that she had meant to say—all that she could have preached from that safe pinnacle of honourable wifehood whereon she stood and proudly faced the world—seemed weak and foolish now. This was no common case of victim and deserter; no stricken Magdalene appealing for compassion to the sex she had outraged—only the serene and perfect trust of a mighty love which neither absence, nor silence, nor death itself could weaken.

She felt abashed and angered, and yet she tried vainly to combat the feelings and say something—anything—that might confound or dismay this serenity.

"Suppose you meet again," she said roughly. "He is in London—it is quite possible."

Sheba's face grew pained and troubled. "How do you know that?" she asked.

"Because I have seen him. I meet him constantly. He is the Earl of Amersley, you know, and society claims us both."

"Society and—Paul." Sheba smiled faintly. How incongruous it seemed!

"I am not likely to be honoured by any notice from society," she said. "I do not fear we shall meet. Besides, he does not know I am alive."

"No, he told me you were dead," said Bessie mercilessly. "I suppose I had better not mention you to him."

Sheba winced visibly. It seemed horrible—incredible—that she, who had been so near and dear to Paul, should have lost all personal touch with his life. That a comparative stranger should be able to speak of him, meet him, talk to him, and she—must remain unknown.

All the old sweet intimate life of that golden year swept back to her memory—unnerved, and left her weak. She looked up and met the cold contemptuous eyes of her girlhood's friend, and some instinct of distrust awoke in her.

"If you meet him as you say," she faltered slowly, "has he—does he ever speak of me?"

"Never," said Bessie coldly. "You forget what a difference there must naturally be between Paul Meredith, the opera singer, and the young, wealthy, courted Earl of Amersley."

"Do you know," asked Sheba hesitatingly, "if his—wife—is with him?"

"Haven't I told you I never knew he had another wife until your mother let it out? I met him in Paris, and when I asked about you, he said you were dead.... I always imagined he had married you."

"It was to have been," said Sheba, "when that other woman appeared. He had thought her dead years before."

"Could he not have divorced her?" asked Bessie curiously.

Sheba shook her head. "The law was against him. She is a vile creature who has attempted his life, and dishonoured his name, and yet . . . he is bound to her as long as she lives."

"And she is Countess of Amersley," exclaimed Bessie. "How shameful! I wonder she does not claim her rights. She is the mother of his little son, I suppose."

"Yes," said Sheba, bending her white face over the papers scattered on the table.

"I don't see much hope for you, then," said the countess presently. "I suppose he keeps the matter quiet for fear of scandal. It need not extensively affect his life in society. He is very popular and very courted. There are plenty of women—young, rich, beautiful—who would be only too glad to be Countess of Amersley."

Sheba winced under the cruel stab. She still thought of Paul as hers—hers only, whatever might betide. Had he altered so much? Had the claims of rank and the new obligations it entailed, changed him so utterly?

Might it indeed be possible that when freedom came to him he would seek some high-born beauty of his own rank to bear his name and honours, and that she—even she—would be degraded to that lot which the self-sacrifice of womanhood invariably wins from the gratitude of man?

The thought—horrible as it was—coiled subtly about the roots of her patient faith, and the slow poison it distilled fell like a blight upon her long-cherished hopes.

Nothing mattered—suffering, privation, hardship, misery—so only Paul were true. But oh ! if he were not——

She could not follow the horror of that thought. She shook it off, angry at its permitted disloyalty. Had she not vowed again and again to believe nothing against Paul but what Paul himself should confess ? Was the voice of the world to outweigh the faith of this vow, and the faith of her own great trust ?

“Paul will not wed any woman,” she said proudly, “except me, if ever freedom comes. We belong to one another !”

“Then why do you pretend you are dead ?”

Sheba shivered instinctively. “I—I could not bear to meet him as a stranger, and that is all he can be now. But, if ever he is free, I shall tell him that I live, unchanged, as I know and am sure he is unchanged.”

“You were always a romantic little fool,” said Bessie sharply. “Do you really know so little of men that you believe one of them would be true to a memory ? They need some more substantial food than that for their love, let me assure you.”

“You do not know Paul,” said Sheba calmly.

She could have said nothing more cutting, even had she been *au courant* with all that had happened since the Earl of Amersley had appeared in the *salons* of the Countess Pharamond.

“Perhaps not,” said Bessie, with an irrepressible sneer. “But he is a man, I suppose, and though men’s characters differ, their natures do not. Do you think his lips have been true to you—his arms empty—his heart unengrossed ? If you do—your faith is little short of sublime. I pity your awakening.”

“I think we have said enough on the subject,” said Sheba proudly. “It is not one I care to discuss, and after to-day we will not speak of it again.”

“Oh ! I willingly agree to that,” said Bessie insolently. “I see you are as obstinately blind to your own interests as ever. Why do you hold on to Paul ? You might make a good marriage, and no one here would know about—Australia.”

Sheba crimsoned angrily. “You—could not understand,” she said. “You take the world’s conventional view of all things. So does my mother.”

The hot colour in her face could not hide its suffering. Bessie noted the quivering lip, the strained eyes, and a flush of triumph lit her own.

"Your mother thinks you ought to marry—that you owe it to her to do so. And now that you are so famous it would be easily accomplished. Take my advice, and look upon the past as a dream. It has had its ending in the story of your book. Let it have one in the new interests of your life."

"My life," said Sheba, "concerns only myself. How I use it—what I make of it—matters nothing to you. I do not desire your advice as to my actions."

"That is a very rude speech, but it is very like you, Sheba," said Bessie coolly. "You are as headstrong as ever, I see, and as likely to come to grief again. But, for sake of the old days, I am willing to be your friend still; not so openly or freely—that is no longer possible—but I can do a great deal for you if you wish."

"I wish nothing," said the girl proudly. "Nothing, except to be left alone—and forgotten."

"You are very foolish," said the Countess Pharamond, drawing on her pearl-grey gloves languidly. "Even genius can be stifled by obscurity. The world does not appreciate humility, my dear, any more than it understands self-sacrifice."

"I do not care for the world," said Sheba, as she rose and opened the door.

Bessie coloured angrily at so unceremonious a dismissal; but her insolent tongue was silent.

After all, she had learnt what she desired to learn. It only remained to utilize her knowledge.

CHAPTER VII.

MARITAL AUTHORITY.

THE Countess Pharamond, leaning back among the cushions of her luxurious carriage, looked—to the world at large—only a very handsome, well-dressed, and somewhat haughty woman. The Countess Pharamond—to herself—was an unhappy, dissatisfied, and tortured person.

The armour of pride in which she had encased herself was not proof against the marital blows and shots which were her daily

experience. The imperious asperity of her temper was stimulated—not subdued—by the petty humiliations she endured in private.

Her marriage had done a greater injury to her nature and character than even she herself was aware of: it was a burden well-nigh intolerable—an hourly humiliation, that warped the little good within her nature, and allowed the bad to send forth new shoots of hypocrisy, rebellion, and deceit.

It had been Pharamond's desire that they should establish themselves in London for the season. She knew that some hidden motive lurked beneath its expression, but she was far from guessing what it really was. She could but obey. The world, that knew the Countess Pharamond as one of its greatest ornaments, would have been amazed to see how humbled and powerless she was in the presence and under the authority of her husband.

She had not told him of the Levisons' visit. She had waited to see Sheba first; and now, as she returned from that interview, she asked herself whether it would not be wiser to keep silence on the matter. She had no intention of keeping up even a visiting acquaintance with so undesirable a person as Mrs. Levison, and Dolly she had always detested. She remembered the count's old infatuation for Sheba, and that memory only encouraged her resolve. He was not likely to hear of her, or to see her; and he could not possibly associate the fame of this new literary star with his memory of the dark-eyed, gipsy-looking girl who had attracted his errant fancy in Australia.

As for Paul——

No. She would tell Paul nothing. Let him still think his old love was dead—the grave was less dangerous a rival than their divided lives. Even with all the accidents of chance, it was scarcely likely they would meet. So wide a difference lay between the station he occupied—the humble insignificance of hers.

The distraction and tumult of her thoughts lasted throughout her drive, and when she reached home and entered her boudoir she was not best pleased to find the count awaiting her there.

He greeted her with that cold and meaning smile she had learnt to hate and dread.

“You are a little late, *ma chère*, are you not? I came to ask

the favour of a cup of your *thé anglais*. I know you indulge in the habit."

"Certainly," she said, ringing the bell as she spoke.

The room was warm and fragrant, and full of pleasant scents from the big bowls of lilies of the valley and Roman hyacinths. A footman entered, and placed tea and cakes and confectionery on the table.

She poured out a cup, and handed it to her husband.

"This is very unusual. I thought you disliked tea," she remarked.

"I learnt to like it in Sydney," he said, "and perhaps I am going back to my old tastes. Do you wonder what has recalled them?"

Her heart sank within her as she met his eyes.

"He has learnt something—or he knows," she thought to herself. "No," she said aloud, and quite pleasantly. "Perhaps you will tell me."

He laughed softly, balancing the spoon on the edge of the cup, and looking at her still with those mocking, bloodshot eyes.

"You think, then, there should be perfect confidence between husband and wife—eh, *ma chère*? Well, I agree with you. That being so, why have you kept back from me the welcome information that our former friends from that delightful land are at present staying in London, and paid you a visit yesterday?"

"I—I was going to tell you," stammered Bessie. "It was only Mrs. Levison, and that odious child. I am sure you dislike them as much as I do. I have no wish to renew the acquaintance."

"Have you not? That is a pity! Because I have—a great wish. You see, *ma chère*, it is best to be perfectly frank and open with me, for I shall always know everything I wish to know."

"Do you suppose I imagined the subject was of such importance?" asked his wife haughtily. "These people are odious—they are not even in decent society. What is the use of keeping up their acquaintance?"

"Where is the gratitude of my sweet Bessie?" asked Pharamond with a sneer. "The mamma Levison was a very useful friend, and a very good one . . . upon a certain occasion. I, at least, have cause to remember that."

He watched the sudden whiteness of the proud face and quivering lips, and sipped his tea with a zest to which the sight of that agitation added keen enjoyment.

"And so my amiable and charming wife thought the subject of no importance," he went on. "What does she think, then, of this additional information?"

He drew a set of ivory tablets from his pocket, and, still glancing from time to time at the white, startled face before him, he began to read :

"'Mrs. and Miss Levison remained here for half-an-hour yesterday. . . . In spite of the acquaintance being undesirable, and the renewal of the old friendship so unwelcome, the Countess Pharamond returned that visit to-day, and has been absent nearly three hours. Why did she return it so soon? . . . or remain so long at the house of people whom she so ardently dislikes?'

For a moment Bessie sat there quite motionless, save for a quickened breath—a sudden flash of hatred from the lowered eyes.

Her sense of surprise at his accurate knowledge was almost eclipsed by her rage at being thus trapped.

"Since you can stoop to play the spy on me," she said, "why did you not go further and find out the *reason* of my actions, as well as the actions? It might possibly interest you more."

"The reason?" His face flushed, and his eyes had a gleam of triumph as well as of gratified malice. "No—I leave that for you to confess. Be sure you speak the truth. You went to see—"

"Sheba Ormatroyd," she said coldly.

He started—losing his own composure as suddenly as she had lost hers.

"Sheba! *Mon Dieu!* But is she not dead? You told me so—"

"I told you what I believed till yesterday. She wishes to be considered dead. She has changed her name. She goes nowhere—sees no one, and"

"And the reason quick! Why does she do it—what does it mean?"

"It means," said Bessie, with the slow unsparing cruelty of hate, "that she is only Lord Amersley's cast-off mistress. She was never his wife."

Pharamond rose, and set down his cup. His face revealed nothing. "Why do you hate her so bitterly?" he asked.

Bessie started. "I I do not hate her. What right have you to say so?"

"I know you *do* hate her. I see it in your face—I hear it in your voice. Some day, perhaps, I shall discover the reason. I learn most things that I desire to learn."

He turned abruptly, and walked over to the door. Reaching it, he paused and looked back. "Since you have renewed the old friendship," he said, "be assured I shall be only too happy to second you. I hope to welcome your friends—*all* of them—under my roof at an early date. See that you manage it."

Then he left the room.

Sickened, enraged, humiliated, the Countess Pharamond remained there—tears of rage blinding her eyes, her frame pulsing with breathless passion. This was the end of her resolves to mention nothing about these hateful people! She was ordered to invite them here—to receive them with welcome and cordiality. The bitter sense of her helplessness came home to her again, and she clenched her hands and struck the delicate inlaid table in sudden fury.

"As God lives I will be revenged yet," she hissed between her set teeth. "Let him beware when my hour comes, for come it will!"

The reflection of her own face, uplifted then and looking back at her, sent a sudden sense of terror to her heart. "I am like—that," she thought. "And he has made me. I am like—that!"

The dawning terror in the eyes that met her own—the abhorrence, and hatred, and loathing that changed the proud beauty of the handsome features—spoke out in no new language. She had heard it before. She heard it now, louder and more terrifying in the silence of this luxurious room. Amidst all the beauty and luxury so lavishly displayed, that face presented itself as the face of its envied possessor—that voice sounded as a warning note of future evil.

* * * * *

The count meanwhile had left the house, and was sauntering leisurely towards the Park. The news he had just heard was so utterly unexpected that he had not yet learnt to think of it with composure.

Sheba Ormatroyd alive! The only woman who had ever wakened a real interest in his heart, whose coldness and indifference had allured his jaded taste and errant fancy. And for all her pride and all her coldness she had sunk to the ordinary fate

of any feminine thing that is vicious, or weak, or tempted. He could scarcely believe it, but there had been truth in Bessie's voice—truth that he had heard even in its ring of hatred. Well . . . if it were true, so much the better. His vicious French tastes and his inherited French morals put their low stamp of depreciation upon most women. It was scarcely possible he should have withheld it from this one. "So she was not cold after all," he murmured, with the triumph that a long-asserted opinion yields when it is verified. "That charm of mystery and resistance was not virtue. Bah! . . . What a fool she was. Look what I would have given her. . . . I have always felt she was the only woman who could have made me faithful."

He would not have been faithful to her any more than to Bessie, if he had been able to marry her. But it pleased him to think so, because Sheba Ormatroyd was the only woman who had ever resisted him. Some had yielded for his own sake, some for the bribes of fortune, some from those mixed motives of rivalry, notoriety, or vanity that seem to hold an attraction for women; but Sheba had been as adamant to all these things, and the thought had power to sting him even now.

"I will see her again. Bessie shall ask her," he muttered to himself. "And . . . it will go hard if I do not triumph in my turn, and revenge myself for her former perversity. As for Amersley——"

A dark frown crossed his brow. "Is he always to be my rival?" he thought, remembering those days at Ischl, and the hints of Hélène de Valette. "Well, *gare à lui!* I may not be always good-natured!"

CHAPTER VIII.

"THE BORES AND BOREDOM OF LIFE."

"OH! to be poor and free once more! The obligations of rank are as weighty as a prisoner's chains!"

Lord Amersley uttered this thought aloud, unconscious that he had done so, till the grave surprise of a small thoughtful face recalled him to the fact that he was not alone.

"Is that so, papa?" asked his little son, who was sitting by the fire in the big handsome library of Amersley House, Park Lane. He had a book on his knee, but he was not reading it. It was a

more interesting task to study that beloved face, to share the thoughts and confidences of that idol of his childish heart.

"Is that so, *mein Liebling*? Of course it is. Look there, and say were we not happier in the old Bohemian days, before your poor father had the misfortune to inherit nobility."

He pointed to the heap of letters lying on the table, the pile of invitation cards awaiting his acceptance, the innumerable demands on his wealth, time, and attention that made the morning post a thing of dread.

The boy's calm, thoughtful gaze followed his gesture. "Why do you read them?" he asked. "I should give them all to the secretary."

His father laughed.

"Nay, Paul. One must not shirk one's duties or one's obligations, be they great or small. There may be just one matter among these that I ought to attend to personally—one genuine claim among a score of impostures that it is my duty to investigate."

"I wish I could help you," said the boy.

He left his chair and crossed over to where his father was sitting at the writing-table, and leaning his elbows on the table and his chin on his hands, seemed to give the matter long and thoughtful consideration.

"Do you ever get bored, father?" he asked presently.

The earl lifted his head and looked at him.

"Very often, my boy. But what makes you ask?"

"I hear people say it so often. They never seemed 'bored' in Australia, did they, papa? The people always looked brisk and busy and content. But here it is so different. The great people in their carriages look tired and listless. When I ride my pony in the Park the other little boys look at me as if they wondered I could enjoy it. They never laugh, or care to gallop only just trot or walk beside the grooms. And the two big footmen in our hall here, they sit and yawn all the afternoon. I have watched them often when you are out, and I heard the one you call Anak say yesterday he was 'bored to death in this dammed slow place.' He did, papa."

"Hush, my boy; you mustn't repeat those expressions," said his father rebukingly. "They don't sound well on your young lips."

"I only repeated what Anak said. I came down and talked to him afterwards, and I told him he might improve his mind if he had so much spare time, and I offered to lend him some books. But he said he didn't like my sort of books, and that I was the 'rummest little chap for a lord that he'd ever seen.' The other footman never speaks at all, papa. He only sits and looks at his legs. Why do you have such funny men about you ? "

"That is one of the 'obligations' of my position," said the earl. "People of my rank must have footmen and all sorts of other useless appendages. They're part of the furniture of the hall, I suppose. The house steward arranged all that, and I have to put up with it."

Little Paul drew his brows together and surveyed his father seriously. "Seems to me you can't do what you like any longer," he said at last.

"We can never do what we like or wish in this world, Paul," said his father. "Circumstances prevent us. But, as I said before, I was much happier when I was poor and free than I am now."

He let the letters lie neglected and looked long and steadily at the thoughtful little face beside him—the face that still had something girlish in its delicate pallor and soft outlines.

"If you were grown-up, Paul," he said, "I would make everything over to you and let you reign in my stead."

"Oh, no . . . no," cried the boy eagerly. "You mustn't say that, papa. I could never be what you are. And I could not live away from you. I should be miserable."

"You think so now," said the earl quietly, "because you are only a little boy ; but you will grow big and strong, Paul, and learn what other young Englishmen learn, and go to the University, and become famous. Then you will be better able to fill this position than I am, because I . . . I never had any of these advantages, you see."

"Are they—advantages ? " asked the boy. " You don't seem to need them, papa, and the boys I have met when you have taken me visiting are not very nice boys, and most awfully stupid. They don't know half as much as I do, and Lord Westerton's son, who is fifteen, told me he had never bothered to study anything at Eton. All he did learn was to smoke cigars, and devil bones. And his eldest brother, who is at

Cambridge, owes nearly fifteen thousand pounds. Would you like me to grow up like those fellows, papa?"

"Indeed, no," exclaimed the earl. "I hope you never will."

"I . . . I don't think it is nice to be rich," pursued Paul, "or easy—is it, papa? One ought to spend one's money so carefully and do so much good. I wonder why some people have so much more than others?"

"So do I," said his father, who liked nothing better than to hear his young son's opinions on the manners and morals by which he was now surrounded.

"It doesn't seem fair, you know," continued Paul. "Every one ought to have enough, and not one person too much and others' none at all. I wonder how it could be managed. I should like to ask the Queen her opinion."

"You may be able to do so," said the earl. "She is very fond of children, and I could introduce you to her."

"Perhaps she would think me too young to discuss the subject with," said Paul, with becoming diffidence. "But if I get to know some of her grandchildren, I will ask them to suggest it to her."

"I certainly should," said the earl gravely. "The example of sacrificing one's own possessions for the public welfare ought to be set by the highest authority."

"Why don't *you* speak about it in Parliament?" asked the boy suddenly.

"Because I am—unfortunately—in the House of Lords, and we are simply expected to echo the opinions and pass the bills of the Commons."

"Does the country get more good from the Commons than the Lords?"

"If you were to put that question to the country, I expect it would say the benefit was about equal," said the earl dryly.

"Aren't you very sorry, sometimes, you had to give up being a singer?" asked the boy. "It must have been such a beautiful life—all that applause, and triumph—and the feeling of how you could make all the people *feel* with you."

"That is the real pleasure of an artist's life," said his father. "To make the people feel with you, as you say. Of course I am sorry, Paul—how can I help being so?"

"Oh, we were so happy . . . so happy. Just you and I, and

Müller and—Sheba. Oh, papa, to think I shall never, never see her again!"

He flung his arms round his father's neck and sobbed aloud. "I was never lonely then, or unhappy . . . But I am always lonely now. You are away so much, and I don't care for any one here, or the life, or anything. Oh, papa, I wish you had never been an earl."

His father pressed the trembling, weeping figure to his breast. His own heart was aching as the child could not guess or imagine. He knew—he had always known—that this sensitive soul and highly-strung nature and delicate frame needed a woman's care—a woman's influence. The intense love of the boy for himself almost pained him. Had he been of stronger body and coarser mind, he would have sent him to rough it as other boys had to do in a public school—but he knew him too well to risk the experiment. What he had heard and seen even in this brief time convinced him that—for the next five years, at all events—home supervision and education would best suit his son. He had no desire to see him transformed into one of the precocious little dandies that formed the juvenile aristocracy of Eton. Pert, insolent youths, with their stable knowledge, their slang, their stolen cigarettes, and close-cropped pates and absurd shiny hats, their supercilious opinions of men, women, and tailors.

He had come across many of these specimens at the houses of his aristocratic brotherhood, and his soul had shrunk in horror from seeing his own son resemble them in any way. He wanted to bring Paul up in frank, clean-souled, honest boyhood. It distressed him that the boy lacked physical strength, and was still, in spite of all care and attention, the same sensitive, old-fashioned, serious child whose education had been committed to Sheba Ormatroyd. How well she had understood and managed him! The poignancy of the old regrets became very sharp and terrible as he saw the boy's tears fall, and knew that the loss he wept for, was a loss both lives must feel for ever.

"Hush, Paul," he said at last, as he swept back the damp soft hair from the boy's forehead. "This is girlish and weak. You must remember you belong to a sex that all through life has to suffer in silence—and endure without complaint. Do you think I have not to do it . . . every day . . . every hour? But

men must be strong and brave, Paul. I would not have anything else said of my son."

The boy checked his tears in a moment. "I am sorry, papa—I could not help it."

"I had no idea you were so lonely," continued the earl. "I wish you had some companions of your own age."

"I would rather have you. I don't care for boys."

"That is just my difficulty," said the earl. "I cannot be with you as much as I should wish, and you are such an odd child—you don't seem to get on with boys of your own age. And I think you read too much, Paul."

"There is nothing else to do," said the boy wearily. "I get tired if I ride more than once a day, and if I want to walk it is always the Park—I am so sick of it. If I could get away into the country, where it was all wild and open like the Bush . . . But it is so different here."

"I shall not stay in town very long," said his father. "Then we will go to Heronsmere. You've never been there yet, nor I either. I believe it is the most beautiful place we have, and wild enough even to suit our savage tastes, Paul. Now I must get through this correspondence . . . See, you may open all the invitation cards, and write 'No' on all of them. Mr. Armytage will know how to answer them."

"Here is one with a note inside," said the boy presently, "and a silver crown on the card. Will you not read it, papa?"

The earl took it carelessly and glanced at the note. His brow darkened slightly.

"I wonder what she means by 'important news?' Well, perhaps I had better go. Write 'Yes' on that card, Paul."

He tossed it back to the boy. The note he put into his pocket.

Paul worked steadily on through the pile, delighted to be of any use, and full of the importance of his task.

"What a great many people want you!" he said at last.
"Don't you care to go to their parties, papa?"

"No," said the earl. "They bore me—or—"

He stopped abruptly, meeting the deep steady gaze of the boy.

"That is Anak all over again, papa. What a funny place the world is! The great people bore each other, and the servants bore each other. Do you think it is because they haven't enough to do?"

"I expect it is," said the earl.

"But you must have a great deal to do, papa. You have so many big houses, and tenants, and farms, and . . . all sorts of things. Do you know everything about all your people?"

"No—o . . . not very much. The stewards do all that."

"Oh!" said the boy. "But wouldn't the people like it better if you did it yourself?"

The earl looked doubtful. "I don't really know," he said. "I never thought about it."

"Will you think about it now?" asked Paul. "And when we go to Heronsmere will you see your people yourself, and let me see them? Surely," he added gravely, "everybody can't be bores."

The earl laughed. "Very well, Paul. We'll be model landlords and see to things for ourselves, and try, in our little way, if we can do something that legislation can't."

"What is that?" asked Paul anxiously.

"Make a few people happy," said his father.

CHAPTER IX.

"YEARS DIVIDE, BUT CANNOT PART US."

THE Countess Pharamond had just entered her reception rooms, dressed for dinner. She expected a small party, every member of which was particularly obnoxious, with but one exception. That exception she had been incautious enough to invite a quarter of an hour earlier than any of her other guests, and she was awaiting his arrival in a state of nervous trepidation, the result of fear and uncertainty. Fear lest her husband should appear and detect her *ruse*—anxiety lest the object of her diplomacy should not present himself.

However, her mind was soon set at rest, for the doors were thrown back by the gorgeous menial in plush and silk whom Dolly Levison so ardently admired, and a stentorian voice announced, "The Earl of Amersley."

Fair, gracious and smiling, she advanced to greet her guest. She looked handsome enough to justify any man's admiration; but there was none visible in the grave sad face or the quiet eyes that met her own.

"How good of you to come so early," she said eagerly. "Did you wonder at my note? You will wonder still more when I tell you my news."

"I can't understand any news being very important to me," said Paul. "But I am all attention."

He seated himself beside her, and watched with some curiosity the visible nervousness of face and manner.

"After I had sent out my invitations," she said, "I had a visit from some old friends—Australian friends. I had no intention of inviting them to-night, but the count insisted upon it."

"Yes?" he said, as she paused.

"They were Mrs. Levison and Dolly," she cried suddenly. "I—I thought I would tell you beforehand. It might not be pleasant for you to meet them unprepared."

He had grown very pale, but the set, stern gravity of his face was not otherwise changed.

"You are right, countess," he said slowly. "It is not pleasant—far from it. I—I would rather not meet these people. I wish you had told me this in your note."

"I—I did not know they would be here," she faltered. "What are you going to do? You can't leave. You mustn't! What would my husband think?"

Velvet-footed, smiling his false welcome, masking his triumph as he masked his hatred, her husband was beside them, ere they were aware of his presence.

"Welcome, my lord," he said, extending his hand to his guest. "I am sorry to be late, but I have no doubt the countess has made amends for my absence."

He glanced at her and then at the ormolu and marble time-piece on the mantelshelf. A cunning smile crossed his lips. Bessie turned pale under the delicate carmine that her maid had so skilfully applied.

"I was under the impression that half-past eight was the hour, *ma chère*," he said.

The earl came to the rescue, touched by the fear on the beautiful face of his hostess.

"The mistake is mine, count. I arrived too early. I had mislaid the card which mentioned the hour."

"Pray do not excuse so welcome an error," said Pharamond, with a perceptible sneer. "We see so little of you that it is a very fortunate one. Has madame mentioned that we expect some old friends to-night?"

"Yes," said the earl coldly.

"Perhaps she has also informed you of another piece of news, startling but delightful to all interested in that so interesting family?"

Paul glanced from the count to his wife, and a vague uneasiness crept over him. "I have heard nothing," he said, "except that I may expect to see Mrs. Levison and her step-daughter."

"Her step-daughter!" said Pharamond, with a meaning glance. "Oh, no, my lord; that is a mistake. Mrs. Levison and her *daughter*—are to be our guests."

It was a cruel vengeance—but the devilish wish to confound his foe and torture his wife had been too strong to resist.

Paul's face paled to the hue of death. In vain he tried to speak. The revulsion of feeling was terrible. The stormy throbs of his heart nearly suffocated him.

"I fear my news has startled you," went on the count mockingly. "We were all startled. The report of Miss Ormatroyd's death was false. She is alive, and with her mother. She will be here to-night."

Still, dead silence.

The lights and shadows of the room were only a whirling mass of confusion to Paul. Heavy, laboured heart-throbs stayed his breath. A great darkness fell upon him—rent asunder suddenly, as it fell, by a ray of hope. "Is this true, Madame Pharamond? For God's sake, tell me," he cried.

He turned to the countess, who had regained in some measure her composure—the dull fury and hatred in her eyes spoke no warning to him.

"It is true, in a way. Sheba Ormatroyd is alive and in England; but she will not be here to-night."

The count turned on her in sudden fury. "Not here? Did I not tell you to insist upon her coming? Do you dare disobey my orders?"

In his passion he forgot his auditor. Paul looked with wondering horror at the furious face and menacing eyes. But Bessie never winced.

"I have no authority over Sheba Ormatroyd," she said icily. "I could not *insist* upon her accepting your invitation. I merely gave it, and she declined."

At this moment the door was again thrown open, and some more guests entered.

Lord Amersley shrank back. He was trembling from head to foot. It was no moment for obedience to conventional laws. He glanced swiftly round. Beside him was a door, partly draped by heavy curtains. It was the door by which Pharamond had entered.

As a new interruption occurred, and distracted the attention of the count and his wife, he slipped through this door, and, in some confused, dim way, he found the hall. "My hat—quick! I am ill—I must leave," he said to the astonished footman, slipping a sovereign into his hand. The lackey gave him both hat and coat, without a word, and in another instant Paul stood in the open air. He almost staggered against the railings. The cool spring wind, as it touched his brow, could not calm or allay the fever of his brain. He tried to think, but thought seemed only a clashing, brazen noise, as of many tongues reiterating but one sound, "She lives—she lives—she lives!"

In the whirl and confusion around he was dimly conscious of a carriage dashing up, of opening doors, flashing lights, a voice, petulant and querulous, saying, "Tell them eleven o'clock, Dolly."

Involuntarily he drew his hat low over his brow and shrank further into the shadows. The two occupants of the carriage passed under the awning; the footman sprang on the box. As the horses moved forward Paul suddenly advanced, and called to the man. Surprised, the coachman pulled up.

"Can you tell me," asked Paul hoarsely, "the address of those ladies you have just set down? I fancy I used to know them years ago."

The light shone on his face, and on the glitter of gold in his open palm. Sykes opined that he was a "real gentleman," and whispered that opinion to his companion. "It's a rum start, though," he added.

"Well, sir," said the footman at last, "one of them ladies lives at Maida Vale, and the other, the old one, she lives at St. John's Wood, near Boundary Road. Which o' them is the party you want?"

"The elder lady—Mrs. Levison," he answered.

The gold was slipped into the outstretched palm, and he was left in possession of the coveted information.

A moment later he was speeding to St. John's Wood in a hansom, utterly regardless of what Count or Countess Pharamond might think of his extraordinary and unexplained departure.

"As if any one, or anything in the world could stay me now!" he cried in his heart. "Oh, my darling—my darling! . . . Can it be true . . . you live—I shall see you again . . . I shall see you again!"

No speed could have been quick enough for his flying thoughts, and eager desires.

He seemed to have lived in a whirlwind since the moment that her name had once more become a living promise to him. To see her, to hear her voice—that low and tender voice so passionately remembered . . . to know with certainty that the same world held them both—that life, dear life, welcome and more precious than untold gold, still knew her safe for his sight and touch—this was all he could think; and a bewildered chaos of pictures and fancies revolved in his brain as the lamps flashed by and the moving figures passed, and the steady trot of the horse's hoofs bore him onward in the sweet spring night.

When the hansom drew up and he found himself at the address given by the footman he was trembling like a woman.... Now that he was so near—now that a moment of time might assure him of the truth—he seemed to have lost the strength or the courage to test that assurance.

When he had lifted the latch of the gate and found himself at the little dark doorway of the bijou villa, the loud throbs of his heart were almost audible in the stillness. The rapid alternation of hope and fear was terrible as any physical pain.

"Miss Ormatroyd? . . . Does she live here?" he asked hoarsely.

"Yes, sir, but she is engaged. She can't see any one to-night."

He put the girl aside as if she were a child, and her words of no consequence.

"Her room—quick—show me," he muttered.

The girl gave a low frightened cry, and pointed to where the lamplight streamed into the hall through a partly closed door.

A step—a sudden movement—the lifting of a girl's head, down-bent over its weary labour, and then—

He was at her feet—his arms about her—one hoarse, incredulous cry his only greeting!

But all the world seemed to stand still for that one moment—nor life nor death, nor heaven nor hell, nor any single thing that

thought could touch—was of any weight or moment then beside—each other.

She had half-risen from her chair, but his arms imprisoned her and through blinding tears that all the strength of manhood could not check, he saw her once again—changed as if by suffering of many years—changed, but only the dearer for such change.

He saw the delicate cheeks grown pale and wan—the large sad eyes so weary and unyouthful . . . and then his head sank on her knees—he cried her name amidst his broken sobs . . . “ My heart —my own—my wife ! How could you be so cruel ! How could you let me suffer through these years of silence ! ”

She trembled greatly. The surprise of this meeting was less to her than to him, for she had known it as a possibility. He—had never even guessed it might happen this side the grave.

“ Oh, Paul ! ” she cried, and then again, and brokenly, “ Oh, Paul, why did you come ? . . . It was cruel.”

“ Cruel ! ”

He lifted his head ; his arms unclasped her slender waist. Still kneeling, he looked at her, incredulous of her meaning. “ Sheba, you can’t mean *that*. Cruel ? Why, I would have walked barefoot to the world’s end—I would have braved the fires of hell itself—to see you again, to know you lived . . . And you let me believe you dead—willingly ? ”

“ It was best.”

“ Oh, dearest ! . . . No.”

The old tender word, the old tender voice, the dear changed face looking back to hers ! She bent her head. A sudden storm of weeping shook her slight frame.

“ Sweetheart,” he said, and took her in his arms, and let his lips rest on her hair that swept his breast. “ May I speak—may I tell you what this parting has been ? It is hard—yet—for I can only think of the joy of finding you alive . . . and I only learnt that a brief half-hour ago.”

She did not speak. She could not. To rest in those long-absent arms, to hear that voice which held all life’s music for her ears . . . this was enough—as yet. Later there would be struggle—pain—darkness. But, oh, for a little while the blessedness and joy of that life’s love of hers !

“ Yes,—tell me,” she said brokenly.

So, holding her there as if no power on earth should ever part them again, he told her of the grief and sorrow and despair that had overwhelmed his soul, and turned all the fair good gifts of fortune to Dead Sea fruit within his lips. He told her of the horror that Müller's news had brought him, and of the endless night of darkness that had settled on his every hope and desire. He told her that—save for his child's sake—he would not have had courage to live on. And always and ever throughout the history of his embittered lonely life, she saw shining that golden thread of his great love for her.

It did not need words. Faithful as her own faith—true as her own soul—were his faith and his soul. As she rested trembling in his arms, her aching eyes hid from his sight, her heart beat once more with the old strength of passion, the old sweet deep content. Almost she forgot the change in his fortunes, the change in her own nature. The need of sympathy, the loneliness of womanhood, the craving—never stilled—for love, such love as this that once had glorified her life—all these sprang fierce and strong to life again and made her weak as she listened to his prayers. "I have found you. Death has given you back to me . . . Sheba, I cannot let you go ever again. . . . I cannot! *I will not!*"

The echo of those words rang in her ears, throbbed in her heart, while—unanswered yet—she listened to the story of those divided years. Not yet would she speak—not yet would she break the spell. Life had come to a pause—sweet and restful—but of brief promise. With closed eyes and lulled senses, she listened.

In a silence that the touch of his lips alone filled with throbbing memories, she strove to recall the thoughts that had seemed so strong, the courage that had seemed so easy, while as yet this meeting and this scene had been but imaged fancies of her brain—feeble dramas planned and acted in some sleepless midnight.

She had always feared it—hoped it—known it, but the situations we imagine and prepare ourselves for, are very rarely the situations that we have actually to face.

She drew a long deep breath as she lifted her head at last, and weakly strove to unwind the close clasp of his arms.

Paul read the signs of a struggle in her face, its sudden pallor, the strained gaze of her eyes, the proud set tightening of her lips.

This was no weak clinging girl on whose beloved face his longing eyes were feasting—it was a woman stern and proud, though loving him as the girl had never loved. He read that, and the change it foreboded, as the passionate prayer upon his lips was stayed by the touch of a trembling hand.

"Death has given me back—but not to you, Paul. Dearest . . . it cannot be . . . it must not. The old life is over for ever between us . . . Between it and this present time is so wide and great a difference that often I wonder, Paul, if I can possibly be the same girl who watched for your coming in the old verandah on those sweet summer nights."

"Dear heart," he murmured—"you try me beyond my strength when you speak of that time. How can you say that love is over for us? You—have not changed, Sheba?"

"Oh, no!" she said, the hot colour dyeing her pale face once more. "Not my heart, Paul—but everything else has changed—for you more even than for myself. You are no longer a poor obscure artist, but a great and titled and wealthy man whose position in the world has a claim upon honour and on duty, and I . . . Paul, I am no longer ignorant. It is no longer possible for me to shut my eyes and dream, and be content. I sought death in madness of desperation—because life had become a thing of shame and torture. When that blessing was denied me—when I knew that, loathing life and despising myself, I yet must live my life and take up its burdens as my just punishment—I resolved that my penance should be—separation from you. Never of my own will would I have recalled you, or broken the silence that—for you—seemed unbreakable."

"Sheba, this is not you speaking such hard and cruel words! . . . Do you forget what vows and promises we made to one another? Even when I thought you dead, it did not absolve my truth. Are you less constant?"

Gently and sadly she withdrew from his arms. "How can I make you understand?" she said wearily. "Paul . . . I have not changed—except to love you more . . . No, don't speak—don't touch me yet—I need all my strength. But love, as I know it now, is not that fervent, foolish, self-forgetful romance that once blinded my eyes. I feel so old, Paul, and so *hard* sometimes . . . and oh, I am so terribly unhappy—but all that makes no difference!"

"It would make all the difference, sweetheart, if you would let me care for you and comfort you once more," he pleaded.

"How—Paul?"

Then—he remembered. White and silent and abashed he rose unsteadily, and for a moment neither spoke, nor met her eyes.

"We said we would be a law unto ourselves," she went on steadily. "It was not possible. Fate was too strong for us. You understand now what I mean, Paul?"

"Yes," he said hoarsely. "But fate may be kind yet. I may be free, Sheba."

She shook her head sadly.

'I thought she would have been here beside you—that for Paul's sake you might forgive."

"Never!" he said, with sudden fierceness. "My whole soul loathes and abhors her! How can you take her name between your lips? It shames you."

He took her hands between his own and pressed them tight against his beating heart.

"Dearest, before Heaven you and you only are my wife. It needs no power of human law to bind me, or hold my every thought and feeling true to you. If I had not known it before, these empty years would have proved it. No one shall ever take your place—I swear it. Fill it or leave it as you please, but it is always there—it always will be there. Do you believe me, Sheba?"

"Yes," she said softly, and trembling exceedingly.

"I put forward no claim; I ask nothing. If you love me as of old, you too must feel how numbed and empty life can be. But you hold the power to transform it for us both. Will you not use that power, Sheba?"

She bent her face upon the hands that he released, and for one long moment there was perfect silence between them.

Then—she lifted up her head, and there was that in the white face and sad despairing eyes that gave hope its death-blow.

"No," she said, and her voice was proud and cold and all unlike itself. "I *cannot*, Paul. The past is over and done with. You cannot make me the girl I was, nor can we go back and recapture our lost joys—relive our lost yesterdays. They are all

over—all dead—and between them, Paul, between them and my memory of you, and all that that memory means and has meant for me, lies something that you have forgotten—that I can't never forget."

"What is it?" he cried in a shaken voice.

Something sadder than any tears was in her eyes as they met his gaze.

"The grave of a little child," she said.

* * * * *

(*To be continued.*)

Literary Islington.

By GEORGE MORLEY.

Author of "THE HISTORY OF LEAMINGTON," "SHAKESPEARE COMMEMORATIONS," ETC.

IN TWO PARTS.

PART I.

WITH the exception of Fleet Street, whose stones have borne the feet of more literary men than any other short street in the world, there are few places to be found so distinctly associated with literature as the past Islington. It is the past with which we are concerned ; the past which saw Islington as a "worshipful village in Middlesex ;" the past which, down to the Augustan age, made the history of English literature the glory of our country.

The Victorian era is an era of social revolutions. Everything changes now before the onward march of civilization ; railways, tramways, canals, and navigable rivers, carry mankind wherever it pleaseth mankind to go ; there is no need, as there was in the days of ancient Islington, for a particular body of workers to become gregarious and settle down as close as possible to the purchaser of their goods—London. The literary man, far over the seas, is now in daily touch with his Fleet Street or Paternoster Row editor or publisher ; unlike Goldsmith, Coleridge, Crabbe, or Jago, he has no need to make a journey to London to offer his manuscript for sale or to be within call of his editor or publisher, when he has been so fortunate as to find him. Perhaps he has fallen upon more cheerful days—but they are practical days, with not a shred of romance about them.

In the past it was necessary for the working bees of the literary hive to be within easy call of London, for London may be likened to their hive, to which they flew from time to time and deposited their poetic and prose honey therein ; so many of the brightest among them chose Islington, "the favourite village hard by London ;" not only for its close proximity to the capital, but because of the country scenery, the country air, the archery, the pleasures, the florics and sports, which were formerly so peculiar to this historic village. And not for exciting pleasures either did some sons of the pen resort to Islington. Violent florics ill consort with some minds that are given to the quiet

and informing study of books, and the making of them ; and there is no doubt but that the smallness and the general tranquillity of Islington were two of the greatest charms and attractions to many writers. The poet Cowley, like Gray, was evidently one of those who loved to go "far from the madding crowd," to leave the noise of the city behind, to commune with Nature in her pleasant solitudes, to wander round old country farm-houses, through dim woods, and down deep valleys ; therefore it is not surprising to find that he was one who found his peace from the clamour of the noisy city in the little village of Islington. Indeed his acquaintance with the calm and quietness of this nature-favoured spot, served to increase his anger towards London ; for when poetizing upon "Solitude," Cowley takes occasion to make some rather disparaging remarks about London, and to prophecy upon its fate in the following manner :—

"The monster London,
Let but thy wicked men from out thee go,
And all the fools that crowd thee so,
Even thou, who dost thy millions boast,
A village less than Islington will grow,
A solitude almost."

Two centuries, however, have not rendered London into a solitude, such as the Islington probably was in which Cowley wrote his angry lines ; rather has the solitude of Islington evolved into "the monster London ;" for could the shade of the passionate poet visit the scene of his former abode, he would search in vain for the fields, the greens, the archery grounds, and the patriarchal trees of the little village which pleased him so much during his lifetime.

But though Islington was undoubtedly a spot most congenial to the labours of literary men, especially such as were, like Cowley, of a delicate and nervous temperament, owing to its prettiness, its healthiness and its quietness ; it must not be supposed that it had no other charms or lacked the hospitality which is so comforting to a stranger in a strange place. Islington, indeed, has a fair record for the perfectly old English hospitableness of its inhabitants ; for the quaint customs which were observed within its parish ; and the general good fellowship, entertainment, and comforting pleasures to be found there. Some account of this is given in that delightfully curious historical remain, Laneham's "History of Queen Elizabeth's Entertainments

at Kenilworth Castle, anno 1575," which might more correctly have been described as "The Princely Pleasures of Kenilworth provided in honour of his Queen and Lover, by Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester." In this literary fragment, so important to the historian of to-day, owing to the magnificent glimpses given of English Court life in Shakespeare's time, will be found a speech made by a person in the character of "A Squier Minstrel of Middlesex." Why mention should have been made of Islington, its charms, pleasantries and hospitalities, at a time when the quaint and sequestered villages of "Leafy Warwickshire," were so lavishly royal in all the forms of welcome and courtesy, is not to be seen at the first sight ; it is most likely to have been, however, because of the fact that at that identical time, Ambrose Dudley, Earl of Warwick and brother to Robert, the Queen's favourite, had a residence at Islington in a street known as Paradise Street ; this mansion is supposed to have been built by Sir Thomas Lovell, Knight, a person of distinction, literary, social and political, in the reign of Henry the Eighth ; after Ambrose Dudley relinquished the occupancy, it became the property of Sir Richard Ducy, Bart., Lord Mayor of London in 1630 ; this mansion, of so much literary and historical interest, in the year 1800, came under the hammer of the iconoclast.

It is this which may be accepted as the reason for the deliverance of the following charmingly quaint commendation of Islington and its manifold attractions, by the "Squier Minstrel of Middlesex," who gaily declared " how the worshipful village of Islington in Middlesex (well known to bee one of the most ancient and best towns in Englande, next to London, at this day, for the feythal freendship of longtyme shewed, as well at cookey feaste in Aldersgate Street, yeerely upon Holyrood Day ; as also at all solemn bridealez*, in the City of London, all the yeer after, in well serving them of furmenty for porrage, not over-sod till it bee too weak ; of mylke for theyr flawney, not yet piled nor chalked ; of creame for theyr custardes, not frothed nor thykened with floour ; and of butter for theyr pastiez and pye paste, not made of well curds, nor gathered of whey in soomer, nor mingled in winter with salt butter, watered or washt), did obteyn long agoog thez worshipful armez in cooler and forme as ye see."

* Bridals.

These, and numerous other recommendations in praise of "merrie Islington," were recounted by the "Squier Minstrel;" and there can be no doubt but that, in the olden days, the ancient town, "hard by London," was most attractive: not only to literary men, poets, essayists, novelists and dramatists, but to many others who loved to escape from the great roar of London, to the country, where the attractions of cream for custards, not frothed or thickened with flour, and of butter for pie paste, not made of well curds, nor gathered of whey in summer, were much too seductive to be refused.

For what could be more charming to men of letters, than the condition of Islington two or three centuries ago? It was perfectly Arcadian; the dairies were as thick in the village ways as the dandelions were in the meadows; all the old and merry English customs, so picturesque, so pleasant, and so delightful to the mind given to contemplation, were in vogue; and Strephon and Phyllis, with their neat attire and polite manners, were always at hand to render that inestimable service to strangers, which the poets have celebrated in their verses from Chaucer downwards. What the "customs of the country" were in the sixteenth century, in the neighbourhood of London, can be plainly gathered from a sermon, preached by Bishop Latimer before Edward the Sixth, on the 8th of March, 1549. In this he says:—

" My father was a yeoman, and had no lands of his own; only he had a farm of £3 or £4 by year at the uttermost, and here-upon he tilled so much as kept half-a-dozen men. He had walk for a hundred sheep, and my mother milked thirty kine. He was able, and did find the King a harness, with himself and his horse; while he came to the place that he should receive the King's wages. I can remember that I buckled his harness when he went into Blackheath field. He kept me to school, or else I had not been able to have preached before the King's Majesty now. He married my sisters with £5 or 20 nobles a-piece, so that he brought them up in godliness and fear of God; he kept hospitality for his poor neighbours, and some alms he gave to the poor; and all this he did of the said farm. Where he that now hath it payeth £16 by the year, or more, and is not able to do anything for his Prince, for himself, nor for his children, or give a cup of drink to the poor."

The early years of the sixteenth century were therefore profit-

able for yeomen. Latimer, who was obviously an industrious man, and therefore successful, for I conceive that success always follows upon industry, though sometimes it may come late ; and from the recorded fact that Mrs. Latimer milked thirty cows, it would almost seem that if the Latimers did not live at Islington, the good wives of the " worshipful village " were remarkably like Yeoman Latimer's wife with regard to the keeping and milking of cows.

Each goodwife kept her herd of kine, and the milkmaids of " merrie Islington," the daughters of the yeomen, milked the herds every day. With this pretty and sylvan picture in the mind's eye, there need be no wonder expressed that the literary men of that day and generation, some of them probably very jaded and very much overworked, should have gravitated to Islington. After an unusually long spell of work, and much burning of the midnight oil, think how pleasant it would be for all those poets and littérateurs, whom I shall hereafter mention, to quit their small and ill-ventilated chambers, and stroll to the nearest dairy ; there to receive a cup of milk from the rosy hand of a pretty country lass ! While the milk nourished the often-attenuated body of the poor author, it also quenched his thirst ; and when taken in conjunction with the sunny smiles of the morn, and the bewitching glances and merry words of the healthful-looking milkmaid, we may be sure the drinking of a cup of milk was a pleasant pastime to the poet, essayist, novelist, and dramatist, at any time resident at Islington.

Being so noted for its dairies it is not surprising to find that many of the older comedies have their scenes, some of them at least, laid in this old-time village. There is one called "The Merry Milkmaid of Islington ;" but this must have been written at a later date, probably at the end of the seventeenth, or, beginning of the eighteenth, century, when the contact with the world of " monster London " had made the inhabitants of the village more selfish and more desirous of gain than they were in the bygone Arcadian days. The following extract from the comedy will give the reader a glimpse of the habits and customs of residents at and visitors to the Islington of that date. The scene is the interior of an inn, and this may be put down as the "Old Pied Bull," erected in the reign of Queen Elizabeth, and historical from its association with Sir Walter Raleigh, who had a residence there

for some time. There are five characters in the scene—Lovechange, Sir Jeffrey Jolt, Artezheim, Lady Jolt, and the Tapster—and the dialogue proceeds :—

LOVE. What is the reckoning ?

TAP. Nine and eleven pence.

JEFF. How's that ? Let's have the particulars. Mr. Lovechange shall know how he parts with his money.

TAP. Why, Sir, cakes two shillings ; ale as much ; a quart of mortified claret, eighteen pence ; stewed prunes, a shilling.

ART. That's too dear.

TAP. Truly they cost a penny a pound of the one-handed costermonger, out of his wife's fish basket. A quart of cream, half-a-crown.

ART. That's excessive.

TAP. Not if you consider how many carrier's eggs miscarried in the making of it, and the charge of isinglass, and other ingredients, to make cream of the sour milk.

ART. All this does not amount to what you demand.

TAP. I can make more. Two three-penny papers of sugar, a six-pence ; then you had bread, Sir——

JEFF. Yes, and drink too, Sir ; my head takes notice of that.

TAP. 'Tis granted, Sir ; a pound of sausages, and forty other things, make it right—our bar never errs.

From the excerpt, which is undeniably amusing, it will be seen that the customs of Islington had undergone a slight change, since "the Squier Minstrel" sang his eulogy in 1575. Still, as Fox, author of "La Bagatelle," said :

Many a darling child of science there
Hath trimmed his lamp and wove his laurel crown.

And not only men of science, and men of letters, but men of blood who made history in battles and wrote it in the pages of a book ; for the warrior, equally with the man of peace, found pleasure, and always will find it, amid such soothing and unexciting joys as were peculiar to the Islington of the past.

That brave, handsome, courtly, but indiscreet and unfortunate warrior, poet, and historian, Sir Walter Raleigh, was so charmed with "the worshipful village near London," its air, its beauty, its inhabitants, and its customs, that he had a residence there identical with the "Old Pied Bull" tavern. Whether the scholar and courtier himself had this mansion erected or no has not been determined ; but he may very likely have done so, for at the time of his residence in Islington he was in high favour with Queen

Elizabeth, and therefore a prominent figure at Court ; and being a man possessed of much wealth and an inclination towards several branches of learning, it is possible that he may have built the house in question in accordance with his own cultivated tastes. This is, of course, conjecture ; but there is no doubt of the fact that Sir Walter Raleigh was a well-known resident at Islington in the best and most enjoyable days of his somewhat stormy career. His "Nymph's Reply to the Passionate Shepherd" may have been prompted by the pastoral scenes constantly before his eyes in his place of abode.

If all the world and love were young,
And truth in every shepherd's tongue,
These pretty pleasures might me move,
To live with thee and be thy love.

Always courtly and chivalrous, as became a scholar, a statesman, and a gentleman, Sir Walter never missed an opportunity for paying a compliment to his Royal mistress. He who introduced tobacco—so fondly loved and eloquently eulogized by Charles Kingsley and scores of other literary men—and established the national custom of smoking "the fragrant weed," also introduced the smoking tavern where the consumer of "Myrtle Grove" could, like the regular tapster, take his ease in his inn. One of these Sir Walter Raleigh founded at Islington, and in honour of Elizabeth called it "The Queen's Head." To this inn the historian of the world frequently adjourned, and there, in the words of the poet who has written so much pleasing verse in praise of Merrie Islington :

At his hours of leisure
He'd puff his pipe and take his pleasure.

It is one of the misfortunes of this country that its people appear to take so small an interest in buildings which have been rendered historic through the residence of a dead genius. Both Sir Walter Raleigh's houses at Islington—his mansion, which subsequently was converted into the "Old Pied Bull," and his smoking tavern "The Queen's Head"—might well have been spared as heirlooms to posterity. But no, an unantiquarian people neglected them, and they became the prey to iconoclasts. The "Old Pied Bull" was demolished in 1825, and the "Queen's Head," which must have rivalled "The Mermaid," of which Beaumont poetized so affectionately in the wit, merriment, and

learning of its guests, shared a like fate four years afterwards. It is a marvel indeed that the "new men" of modern times allowed them to live so long.

As Sir Walter Raleigh was himself a member of the Club held at "The Mermaid" in Cheapside, of which Shakespeare and Ben Jonson were also members, it may be relevant to give here the lines of Beaumont, written in a letter to Ben Jonson, which were as applicable to the "Queen's Head" at Islington, as to "The Mermaid," nearer London.

What things have we seen
Done at the Mermaid ! heard words that have been
So nimble and so full of subtle flame,
As if that every one, from whence they came,
Had meant to put his whole wit in a jest,
And had resolved to live a fool the rest
Of his dull life.

Perhaps that glowing ease and charm of literary style which distinguishes the essays of Joseph Addison may be traced to the fact that he, like so many of his predecessors of the pen, delighted in the simple pleasures and pensive charms of a country life. To escape from the city, its heat, gloom, smoke, and noise, was a blessing even to such town-bred literary men as Shakespeare, Jonson, Marlowe, Heywood, Middleton, Beaumont and Fletcher, and the galaxy that intervene between Raleigh and Addison, all of whom very probably, although there is no documentary evidence to prove the fact, had an established acquaintance with Islington, "that merry village adjacent to London, and the favourite resort of its citizens;" and persons who, like Addison, were reared in the country, amid scenes of so much pastoral beauty as were common a century or two ago, would, after a residence in "the monster London," be all the more anxious to renew their acquaintance with the charms of rural life which they had withdrawn from, but had not forgotten. In finding the gentle critic of *The Spectator* therefore located at Islington, affords the reader no occasion for wonder, inasmuch as the studies of Addison were devoted as much to subjects connected with the country as with the town; and his inclinations being more towards rural than urban pursuits, it is only natural to find him at some such peaceful and pleasant resort as "the country town hard by London," as Strype, in his "Survey of London," terms Islington.

Addison, too, was by no means a robust man, and, his literary

labours having made visible impressions upon his body, it is almost certain that he visited Islington in the hope of improving his shattered health ; which could not have been a difficult matter, having regard to the number of dairies in the village, even in his day, at which glasses of the nourishing beverage could be had at any hour ; and also taking into account the piles upon piles of toothsome cheese cakes made for the delectation of visitors, for Islington was formerly as renowned for its cheese cakes as Chelsea was for its buns, or as Banbury now is for its cakes. In the quiet and seclusion of this place, therefore, it may be decided that Addison succeeded in restoring his health to a condition such as to fit him for the onerous duties in the State which had fallen to his lot to perform ; and also to endue him with new literary spirit to enable him to polish and add charm to the literature of the Augustan age in which he lived—an age second only to the Elizabethan in vigour, grace, and originality.

In writing of the celebrities of Islington, Fox, author of "Delineations of Home Scenery," published in 1801, says :

There Addison from public haunts withdrew,
To polish, to correct, to charm mankind ;

and of the truth of this description there cannot be two opinions, for no matter how much Addison loved the place in which he was for the time being sojourning, if he saw abuses there he would endeavour to correct them ; this he did with regard to Islington, and also as affecting various villages in Warwickshire through which he was accustomed to pass on his way to his residence, Bilton Hall, near Rugby. To the couplet quoted above, the author adds the following : "I have in my possession an old edition of *The Spectator*, which, under paper No. 393, signed I. (one of the distinguishing marks of Addison), has this note :—By Addison—dated it is supposed from Islington, where he had a residence."

That the moral essayist, therefore, was a sojourner at the "merrie village" is practically certain ; that he also profited by his residence there is fully as certain, for Addison was one of those happily ordered individuals who see

Sermons in stones, and good in everything ;

and some of his most entertaining essays on country life and manners doubtless owe their birth to the same cause. Though M. Taine, the eminent French critic, is usually so satirical at the ex-

pense of English literary men, there can be no question but that his estimate of Addison, given on page 103 of the second volume of his "History of English Literature," is most temperate, just, and even graceful. In this he says:—"It is no small thing to make morality fashionable. Addison did it, and it remained the fashion. Formerly honest men were not polished, and polished men were not honest ; piety was fanatical, and urbanity depraved ; in manners, as in letters, one could meet only Puritans or libertines. For the first time Addison reconciled virtue with elegance, taught duty in an accomplished style, and made pleasure subservient to reason."

This criticism is good, but it is no better than Addison deserved. He was one of the chief makers of pure English, and though his literary style, from its very avoidance of all the arts and tricks of sensationalism, now so much in vogue, is not now so popular as the student of literature could wish, it will always remain as a delight to the cultured reader, and as a model to those who contemplate writing essays or making books. It must be with them, as M. Taine says it was with Dryden ; who, as he was a regular *habitué* of Will's Coffee-house and other places of literary resort, may also have betaken himself to the "Queen's Head" at Islington—"his reading was that of a man of culture and a critical mind, who does not think of amusing or exciting himself, but who learns and judges." When they have acquired these tastes, the pleasure experienced in reading the moral essays of Addison will be far above the fleeting and demoralizing delights pertaining to a French romance, or one of those soulless and empty books rejoicing in the name of modern novels.

Such delightful lines as the following may very well have been written during Addison's sojourn at Islington, for though the phenomenon of the Heavens is much the same in all parts of England, yet, being in weak health, he would naturally have more leisure to meditate upon the mysteries of the earth and sky at this period.

Soon as the evening shades prevail,
The moon takes up the wondrous tale,
And mighty to the listening earth
Repeats the story of her birth ;
While all the stars that round her burn,
And all the planets in their turn
Confirm the tidings as they roll,
And spread the truth from pole to pole.

While most of its celebrities were imported, and this owing to the attractions of health and pleasure, Islington may be said to have had some which might almost be called home-grown. One of these was Daniel De Foe. This son of a butcher in Cripplegate was sent to school at Newington Green, then within the parish of Islington, and there he learnt the rudiments of that language which he was subsequently to employ with such crushing force against those men and things which appeared to his honest senses to merit castigation. The times were stirring ones in the early days of De Foe's life ; parties were strong ; monarchs were insecure upon their thrones ; secret societies and petty rebellions were upsetting the nation ; and life was regarded so lightly that for the merest offence persons were transported or hanged. In this era of tempest and storm, De Foe, at the age of twenty-two, having left school at Islington, and "put away childish things," took arms with Monmouth, "the darling of the English nation," as Goldsmith called him in his "History of England." The pretty dairymaids and the merry sports of the village had no charms for him then, for he was young and delighted in more excitable pastimes ; besides, he had not then begun to wield his vigorous pen in the causes of religion, letters, or politics. De Foe, indeed, was a restless spirit, and as fortune was never on his side, but always against him, he was not so well able to enjoy the delights of country life as some of his more favoured brethren of the pen. His face, however, was no doubt well known at Islington. What it was like can be gathered from the proclamation, issued for his arrest, from St. James's, on the 10th of January, 1703, in which he was described in the following words : " He is a middle-sized, spare man, about forty years old, of a brown complexion, and dark brown coloured hair, but wears a wig ; a hooked nose, a sharp chin, grey eyes, and a large mole near his mouth."

Being so closely associated with Islington when a boy—and what boy ever forgets the scenes in which he passed his school days ?—De Foe probably maintained a regular acquaintance with the little village to which all Londoners, or many of the wealthiest, resorted during the summer, when the "cookey feasts" were held, and the cream for custards was both good and plentiful ; and being a man distinctly of his age and even with all the doings of the time, he formed, no doubt, one in the brilliant circle of literary lights that illuminated the taverns, the coffee-houses and

the smoking rooms of the day with increased lustre. He certainly knew all the clubs and places of literary resort in "the monster London," and it cannot be an idle supposition to suggest that he was equally familiar with the like houses of call at "merrie Islington," for De Foe was a man of action, a man of observance, and a man who never forgot what he once had learnt.

London speaks of De Foe in many places, because he was a Londoner, and a part of its great heart ; one of the chief was Old Temple Bar, where he stood in the pillory for having written "a scandalous pamphlet," entitled "The Shortest Way with the Dissenters," and was thus satirized by Pope :

Earless on high stood unabashed De Foe.

but a spot which should be of almost touching interest in a great person's career, is that whereon he spent his school days ; and although the whole face of Islington has changed since the author of "Robinson Crusoe" began to write fiction at fifty-four, it should not be forgotten that he was a scholar at Newington Green, one of the finest literary characters of his time, and an honour to the English literature which he helped to make.

If the stones of that picturesque and venerable old pile, Canonbury House, or Tower, as it is called, at Islington could speak—and Shakespeare tells us that there are "sermons in stones"—how much of the literary history of the past could they add to that which is already known ! Its remains are covered with the dust of centuries, and its walls have held the good, the brave, and the great ; the priest, the warrior, and the poet during the whole of that time. Originally built in 1362, as a mansion for the Priors of St. Bartholomew, it has existed through all the changes and tumults of 529 years, and to-day rears its fragments to the sky—a work more durable even than man, with his pride and his semblance of immortality.

Men of letters, many of whose names have gone unrecorded and will thus never be known—for the modern age, according to Mr. John Morley, has nothing to do with the past, but only with the future, and will not take the trouble to hunt out dead secrets—have burned the midnight oil in the rooms—the gloomy rooms of Canonbury House, where the spirits of the old monks came, with the silent footsteps of angels, and walked in the places that knew them in life. In his "Shepherd and Philosopher," Gay

makes the rustic, amazed at the learning of the scholar exclaim :

Whence is thy learning ? Hath thy toil
O'er books consumed the midnight oil ?

and the question may be answered in the affirmative with regard to the literary men of Islington who had lodgings in Canonbury House. They burned the midnight oil, and wrote long and laboriously ; indeed the hoary pile must have been eminently congenial to the pursuit of learning and the acquisition of knowledge, on account of its quietness and entertaining associations ; and if ever the writers and readers became oppressed with the silence and sombreness, so as to be growing nervous and morose —and the brightest literary man cannot escape such feelings at times—they could put aside their pens for awhile and go to the dairies for a talk to the sweet lasses of Islington, to the archery ground to see Topham, “the strong man of Islington,” draw the long bow for a wager, or to one of the taverns, there to learn the latest news and have a passage of wit with the cleverest guest in the company.

Canonbury House, speaking of monks, orisons, and black-letter manuscripts, was therefore a fit place for the compilation of long and weary works, such as the literary man often produces as heirlooms to the coming ages. It could certainly have had no more worthy inmate than Ephraim Chambers, whose labours with his “Cyclopædia” must have rivalled, if not exceeded, those of Dr. Johnson, himself a well-known visitor at Islington, in connection with his dictionary. Here was a man, withdrawn from the world, shut up in a house which could not, in any sense of the word, have been called cheerful, working on with splendid care and magnificent courage, upon a book of a stupendous character, for the use of future ages. Such men as Ephraim Chambers are benefactors to the human race. By their ill-paid toil they hand knowledge down to those who come after them, and I can conceive no higher glory for the strictly literary man, than to have added, by his laborious researches and sound deductions, one single subject to the information in the possession of mankind. Whilst engaged in the continuation of his “Cyclopædia,” Chambers died in Canonbury House in 1740 ; and if this edifice had had no other occupant, it would have had a great claim upon the House Preservation Societies of the past and

present ; but, as I shall show in another paper, it housed the author of that most charming of all novels, "The Vicar of Wake-field," and on that account it is doubly worthy of notice.

When a great man dies his greatness dies with him, and posterity does not in the least care about any of his belongings, his children, grand-children, or household gods—with the exception, perhaps, of his books, his letters, and his manuscripts, and these are likely to command high prices at the auction marts. This is the perfect English custom. There have been scores of cases in which the children and other members of the families of great men, often literary men, have been neglected and allowed to live as best they could, or die in the workhouse. Such a case, though one in which the person concerned was not reduced quite to the necessity of appealing to the State for help, is recorded in connection with "merrie Islington."

In Newton's "Life of Milton" occurs the following sentence : "A man (Milton) who will be an everlasting glory to the nation," and with it most students of English literary history will be found to agree, for in the "Paradise Lost" England has a divine poem which is not likely to be rivalled during the coming centuries ; and aught connected with its author should have been most scrupulously regarded by the nation to which he bequeathed his inspired song. Unfortunately nations are slow to mete out justice or to assume the responsibilities of parents, and it was so in the case of Milton's grand-daughter. Though the price paid to Milton, by the nation as it were, for an immortal addition to its literature, was only ten pounds, yet the nation failed to preserve from poverty and distress, Mrs. Foster, the granddaughter of the poet. No doubt some of the eminent writers of the middle of last century were greatly shocked to find that this modest and retiring relative of a great man, the last of the Milton family, was keeping a chandler's shop in Lower Holloway. The heritage of Milton had fallen upon his grand-daughter. In May, 1754, this uncomplaining gentlewoman died at Islington, but happily not before Dr. Johnson and other literary lights of the day had lightened her lot to the extent of £130, the proceeds of a representation of "Comus," given in her behalf at Drury Lane Theatre, with a preface spoken by Garrick.

Buy my Kingcups.

By the Author of "JACK URQUHART'S DAUGHTER"

I HAD never wanted to go to this ball, such functions not being in my line ; but Jack Gardiner insisted, and I gave in. He was anxious that I should see the pictures at Broadwater Lodge, and he thought that I might never have another opportunity. As it happens I have had many other opportunities ; but they were the outcome of that first visit.

Gardiner was one of my oldest friends. We were chums both at school and college, but after our parting one summer morning at Oxford Station we never met again for ten years, during which time many things had happened to us both. I had become a fairly successful member of the bar, and Jack a rising diplomatist. Throughout those years I had seen nothing of him, and heard from him but rarely, but when we met again on the shady side of Pall Mall in the spring of 188- we took up the thread of our friendship just where we had dropped it a decade earlier, Gardiner belonging to the superior class with whom we have no need to reinforce ourselves nor send tokens of remembrance. He was the prince of good fellows.

It was through Jack that I first made acquaintance with the smart world, hitherto an unknown land. His aunt, the Duchess of Doncaster, was particularly civil to me, and Jack used to declare that she thought I should *do* for Lady Joan, her youngest daughter, who was short, and shy, and plain. Lady Cyrilla, the beauty, had been intended from infancy for her cousin, but Gardiner's rigid determination not to marry was proof against all "Cylla's" blandishments.

The Duke used often to tell me that it was a great pity Jack did not settle ; he was so clever—and then a diplomatist ought to marry. Moreover, Jack was getting on. If by the time a man reached the age of forty his home was not tenanted by children it was apt to become the abode of crazes—or vices.

I denied the probability of either in my friend's case, and added that I thought a man was free to please himself in such matters : a statement that his Grace flatly contradicted.

Some men might be free to please themselves—poor men, and

men in insignificant positions—but Sir John Gardiner was *not* free. *He* owed a duty to Society, and Society would expect to be paid.

I thought that Society would probably not get what she expected, but I did not say so.

As a rule when a man tells me that he means never to marry I don't believe him, for I have listened to so many similar declarations from friends whose weddings I have (alas!) been compelled to attend. But somehow or other I did believe Gardiner. His manner carried conviction.

The first time he ever announced his celibate intentions I was sitting with him in his rooms in Albemarle Street, a day or two after our meeting in Pall Mall, when my attention was called to a clever picture by Van Beers that hung over his mantelpiece, "A Yacht at Anchor."

"That is good," I said.

He nodded acquiescence: "The Gentille!—Yes! that is the way to pronounce it—Gentille, not 'Gentille.' She belongs to Prothero, and was named after an old gipsy whom he and I once interviewed at the Devil's Dyke. The woman predicted his coming wealth, which was most unexpected, and when he did inherit old Chandler's fortune, out of gratitude to the seeress he called his yacht after her."

"And what did Mrs. Gentille predict for you?" I asked.

"What I knew before; that I should live and die a bachelor. . . . Try one of those cigars; they are rather better than the darker ones."

I saw he meant to drop Gentille and the yacht, so to change the subject I asked the name of the lady whose portrait stood amongst many others on an opposite table dedicated to photographs. She was so plain that to account for her presence there I decided that she must be a relative.

"Miss Gonnet. She is dead now—poor girl! I met her a few years ago in Paris, studying. Had she lived she would have made a big name."

"In what way?" I asked.

"Painting. She was very clever."

A minute later I noticed the initials "E. G." affixed to a bunch of spring flowers—Lent lilies, kingcups and anemones—that hung immediately under the Gentille. "Was that her work?"

"Yes," he answered, and then again he promptly turned the

conversation ; and from that moment I began vaguely to connect Jack's determination not to marry with his artistic collection. *On pense toujours à quelqu'un à propos de quelque chose.* And I now thought of some woman, whose life had both coloured his and chiselled its form, in connection with the pictures that seemed to be the threads with which the pattern of Jack's history was enwoven.

I too am very fond of paintings, and when Gardiner mentioned the gallery at Broadwater Lodge he overcame my last objection to accompany him to that scene of festivity.

"It will be one of the best balls of the season," he told me. "The Prince and Princess are to be there, and all the beauties. And last, not least, Lady Belmont."

"Who is she ?"

"The wife of a brother diplomatist, who has just returned from this special mission to Central America. They say he is to be sent next to Petersburg, whither I much want to go. I know him a little ; I met him once at Athens ; and I rather want to come across him again."

"And is milady a reigning belle ?"

"So they say. I haven't seen her yet. I have only heard of her from Lateward, who was with them in Peru. He raved of her."

"One is very apt to rave of a compatriot, that one has met in an out-of-the-way place, where there was no competition."

"Exactly so. *Parmi les aveugles les borgnes sont rois—or reines in this case.*"

So it ended in our going together to the ball, where I soon lost sight of Jack, and amused myself by standing in a doorway between two rooms, watching the gay throng. Presently I caught sight of a woman, whom I at once decided was Lady Belmont—and I was right. A *belle* ought to be immediately recognizable ; and by that term I do not mean a beautiful woman, which is a very different thing. True beauty is the correlation of inner to outer graces. And all Lady Belmont's graces were outer. Of that I felt certain.

She had a lovely little face ; but it was a mere face.

"A mere most lovely, dainty blossomed face,
And statue-moulded body—only this."

Whilst I was looking at her and amusing myself by listening

to the remarks—none too kind—about her appearance which were going on around me, I caught sight of Jack approaching rapidly from the inner room. He had seen Sir Thomas Belmont and was evidently hurrying towards him. Just as he came within a few yards of her ladyship, the group that had formed around her parted, and he and she stood face to face. Almost mechanically I turned to look at him, to read in his countenance what he thought of the beauty that was supposed to turn all (masculine) heads. And never shall I forget what I saw there. Joy, surprise, admiration, horror, love, a hundred conflicting emotions were struggling for the mastery. For one brief moment he seemed to lose all control over himself. But in that moment Sir Thomas turned and recognized him, and then I heard the usual formula: "Gardiner, let me introduce you to Lady Belmont." And as Jack bowed, his countenance was as calm and impassive as ever, and for an instant I was tempted to doubt the evidence of my own senses.

Could I have been dreaming? No, I knew I had not when Jack looked round and met my gaze, and read in it the bewilderment I could not conceal. A minute later he had left the room, and shortly afterwards I found myself standing up in a set of lancers, with Lady Joan Pierrepont for my partner. She was full of the new beauty, concerning whom she had been hearing much that afternoon. General Devereux had been calling at Doncaster House, and had told the Duchess that Sir Thomas Belmont had married shortly before starting on that special mission to Central America, from which he had only just returned; that he believed Lady Belmont's maiden name was Langwell or Langley, or something of that sort—that it had been a case of love at first sight, and that the diplomatist's fair bride had been met, wooed, won, and wedded in the short space of a month. General Devereux had also said something about Lady Belmont's mother: that she painted, or sang, or wrote, or did something—Lady Joan could not exactly remember what. Did I think Lady Belmont very pretty? she asked.

"Very," I replied absently. I was not thinking of her at all; but of Gardiner, my old friend and schoolfellow.

Two days later, Jack dropped in upon me one afternoon when I was fortunately not very busy.

"I have come to say good-bye," he exclaimed, throwing himself into my well-worn leather arm-chair. "I am off next week to Rio."

"To Rio!" I repeated in amazement. "Why?"

"Stanton has died suddenly, and I have been offered his vacant place; I'm glad to go."

I felt certain that he had *applied* for the vacant place. "I thought you wanted to go to Russia."

He shook his head. "Not now. Lord Derwentwater is returning home soon, and the place will be offered to Belmont, I happen to know, and—and— Well, I should not be saying all this to you, but you were there last night, and saw—and—"

"Don't tell me anything you don't want me to know," I interrupted him quickly. "I certainly saw something—enough to puzzle, but not enough to enlighten me. I read a riddle, but not the solution to it."

"You shall have it, then, now in four words. I love Lady Belmont."

"You fell in love with her at first sight?"

"I did."

"But just reflect. You admire—well, you love her; but it is at first sight, and a second sight may reverse your previous opinion. In the name of all that is wise and prudent don't throw up your chances of advancement in a chosen career for the sake of what is probably a mere passing fancy."

"It hasn't passed in four long years," he said bitterly.

Then he *had* known her before!

"Four years ago, Dick, I was in town for a couple of months just before I was sent to Athens. I was staying at Queen's Gate, at Uncle Lorrimer's. The family were all away, and I had the house to myself, and naturally I was out all day long. Every morning when it was fine I used to go by the Underground from South Kensington to Charing Cross, for the sake of the few minutes' walk at the beginning and end of my journey before turning into the F. O. One day—I can remember it as if it were yesterday—I was crossing by the corner of Manson Place when I heard some one say: 'Will you buy some kingcups this morning, sir?' I looked round, attracted by the clearness and sweetness of the voice, and saw a young girl whom it seemed to me must have dropped straight from heaven at my feet. I need not

describe her to you, you have seen her for yourself; but I can assure you she was even lovelier then than now."

That I could easily believe, for Lady Belmont's was not one of the faces that gain with time. It had the beauty of the healthy, happy young animal—innocent, but with the innocence of ignorance, and perfectly soulless.

"I bought a bunch of kingcups," continued Jack, "carried them with me to the F. O., hastened back to that corner in the early afternoon, bought more flowers, and stood chatting with the fair seller whilst a biting east wind blew dust that burnt like cayenne pepper down my throat. On the morrow I repeated my folly, and for three consecutive to-morrows. Then came a pouring wet morning, and as I drove past Manson Place there was no one to be seen. In the afternoon the rain cleared off, and I was at my corner by four, but *she* did not appear. The next day was Saturday, and I lingered talking to my darling for nearly half-an-hour, trying to learn something of her history. 'I have none,' she said; 'mother and I are poor, and I sell flowers, and she does what she can to make money.' I asked if I might call on them. 'No,' she answered. 'Mother was an honest woman and she was an honest girl, and they must not be having any gentlemen visitors.' I was just going to reply that I loved her with all my heart, and heaven knows what else, when old Admiral Spence came hobbling up and carried me off, saying as we went that he wished the police would "clear the streets of those d——d flower-girls." Well, that same day I heard the news of my appointment to Athens, and I resolved to take *her* with me—as my wife."

"Good heavens!" thought I, "and I have always looked upon this man as one of the most level-headed of my friends."

"Throughout Sunday," continued Jack, "I tramped about the streets of Chelsea—for it was there that I had made up my mind that my sweetheart lived—but all in vain; I never caught sight of her. In the evening I received a telegram calling me out of town. I was away a day and a half. On my return the rain was again pouring down in torrents, but early the next morning I was at the old corner. The big basket was in its place, but a stranger stood beside it.

"'Where is the girl who usually sits here?' I asked.

"'Dunno,' was the reply. Then, 'Nobody never sits here; but now I've come.'

"But a girl was here all last week."

"Dunno your girl," was the only answer I could get, and at that moment another woman came up:

"Peggy Shaw used to stand here sometimes; she's gone to service now. Her mother's dead, and Peggy ain't no good at sellin'."

"How prone we all are to accept as evidence statements that square with our own views and wishes! Peggy, who was of course 'no good at sellin'," was unquestionably the girl I was in search of. But oh, how I must be boring you, Dick! Well, I went that same afternoon to the wretched street in Battersea where I was told that the Shaws had lived, and there I learnt that Peggy was now in service in Queen's Road, Bayswater. I made a note of the address, and as I was turning away I heard a blowsey hard-featured woman say to another of her kind: 'Well, Peggy was a rare homely one to look at, and yet a gentleman comes here to ask for her.'

"She wasn't so bad neither," replied the other, "afore she had the black small-pox so badly; nearly eatin' away one eye."

"As you may fancy, I never took that walk to Bayswater. The half-eaten away eye settled the question of identity; but for the next few days I paced the streets until I was ready to drop. I cross-questioned policemen and cabmen and street loafers of every description, but all in vain! And on the appointed day I started for Athens.

"We must live our lives though the sun be set,
Must meet in the masque where parts we play;
Must cross in the maze of Life's minuet,
Our yea is yea, our nay is nay.

"But while snows of winter or flowers of May:
Are the sad year's shroud or coronet,
In the season of rose or of violet,
I shall never forget to my dying day."

"But for rose or violet I read kingcups or anemones. Well, I went abroad. I tried everything—work, play, dissipation, everything, I think, except drink. But the one nail, instead of drivin' the other out, seemed only to drive it further in. They say, Dick, that there comes a time when all men forget, but that day has yet to dawn for me."

"But it will dawn," I replied. "The deepest and most ardent

love dies out if it has nothing—neither hope nor certainty—to feed upon. The number of *grandes passions* which can feed upon themselves are so few as to be practically non-existent. Those which can do so almost cease to be love in its human sense, and become a kind of cult."

"My case, then, must be the exception to the rule," said Gardiner drily. "At all events, my duty is plain and my course clear. I cannot face the prospect of meeting her daily. All hankering after *les biens d'autrui* is a torture when it isn't a sin. Generally it is both. I needn't add that all I have been telling you is between ourselves—for as long as I live, at all events."

I nodded acquiescence, smiling faintly over the "As long as I live." I do believe in the existence of men who have never loved, but I do not believe in that of those who have only loved once. *Qui a bu boira.* The heart, like the body, contracts habits.

The following week I dined at Doncaster House, where I found myself seated at table between Lady Joan Pierrepont and Lady Belmont. The Duke's youngest daughter was not a great talker, and for some time Lady Belmont monopolized my attention. Her conversation was of the style that needs youth and beauty to make it pass muster. She was (in the slang of the day) full of chaff; but it was very innocent chaff, and equally free from either malice or impropriety. I suppose she found me dull and not up to date, for she soon began to rally me on my low spirits. I admitted my shortcomings, adding, as an excuse, that an old and valued friend of mine, Sir John Gardiner, had started that morning for Rio de Janeiro, and that I believed the place was very unhealthy.

"Sir John Gardiner!" she exclaimed; "I know him. That is to say, I was introduced to him the other night at Broadwater Lodge."

"You had never met him before?" I asked, looking straight into her eyes.

She shook her head. "No; that is to say, I think not; but I have a bad memory for faces, and since my marriage I have met and been introduced to so many new people that I constantly find myself failing to recognize some one who claims acquaintance with me. It is an awful fault in a diplomatist's wife, I know, and I live in dread of Sir Thomas sending me to some of those professors who teach memory."

"Nothing would teach some people," I replied curtly.

It was six months later before I again came across Lady Belmont, and, strange to say, she *did* remember me. We met on the "island" between St. George's Hospital and Hyde Park Corner, on a dull December morning, when the sky was one still grey cloud, and the wind was driving little flakes of snow through the chilly air. She was looking very pretty in her furs, with a touch of bright red velvet in her hat, and she held out her hand with a bewitching smile.

"You see I do know you again."

"You do me too much honour, Lady Belmont."

"Please don't be sarcastic. I hate it. If you are, I shall try to forget you."

"Then you probably won't succeed, for

*"Lorsqu'on songe qu'il faut qu'on l'oublie,
On s'en souvient."*

She laughed. "I wish, then, that I could think I ought to forget all the hundred and one people I have to see to-day—dressmakers, milliners, coachmen, grooms. You know, of course, that we are going to Petersburg. My husband has started, and I have to follow after the new year. And, oh! the shopping, and the wiring, and the arranging! My poor head is in a whirl. How is your *fidus Achates*, Sir John Gardiner? I conclude by your woeful countenance that he is still away."

"And will never return," I answered. "I heard of his death this morning. He was carried off by an attack of the same kind of fever that killed young Stanton."

"How awful!" she exclaimed. "Poor fellow! and he was so handsome, too! I remember him quite well at Broadwater Lodge."

"And nowhere else, Lady Belmont?"

"You speak with intention, Mr. Halford. Ought I to remember him somewhere else? And where?"

We had been walking together during this brief conversation, and had now reached the corner of Park Lane, where I had to turn off.

"Tell me," she continued, speaking rather imperiously, as she signalled to the driver of a hansom passing at the moment. "Tell me. You *must*."

I looked her full in the face as I answered, "Will you buy some kingcups this morning, sir?"

She started, and coloured vividly.

"Mr. Halford, I never knew . . . I did not recognize . . . I assure you I didn't. I . . . Oh, what must you have thought of me?"

"That signifies very little," I said.

"I beg your pardon; it signifies a great deal; and I must tell you—but, remember, it is between ourselves. I did it for a bet. Somebody betted me ten pounds that I would not sell flowers in the street for a whole week, and I did it, and I won my money. I was such a harum-scarum girl—and we were really very poor; and my mother never looked after me; she was always writing trashy novels." (Whilst you were living them, I thought.) "And I remember now, perfectly, that there was some one who came to buy of me, and . . . and . . ."

"And who fell in love with you," I said, finishing the sentence for her.

"No, no!" she cried. "Not that. It was only in jest."

"To you, perhaps. Not to him. Good-bye, Lady Belmont."

"Good-bye, Mr. Halford. Please don't think very unkindly of me; and, remember, what I have been telling you is between ourselves."

"Between ourselves," I murmured; and again I was thinking of Jack, and not of her.

In another minute the hansom had vanished from my sight, hidden by the fog and the driving snow, and I was speeding up Park Lane towards Hertford Street, where dwelt a fair client, who had made the love-match of the previous season, and who was already longing to be freed from "the chain that galls but cleaveth not." Would Jack have been happier had he gained his heart's desire, and married that pretty doll? I asked myself.

Who should say? In the volume of the book of fate there is one terrible chapter, at the head of which we read these words: Gratified desires.

Captain Dempster's Love Story.

PART I.

THERE was no doubt about Dempster's being a rolling stone. When he came to us, it was because he had tried nearly every other profession, and either failed in his exams., or got tired of the life, after a very brief trial. He had begun to walk the hospitals, and always seemed to have rather tender regrets for those two years. Then he had thrown up the whole thing suddenly, and gone out to Mexico, where he wasted his substance on a ranche—lost the friend who went out with him, and who died of typhoid—came back, and managed to scrape into the army, in a back-handed way, through the militia. A stirring life, that no one would have guessed at, who had seen him lying, in his essentially lazy way, in one of the long chairs on the mess verandah. He had a slow, undecided, indolent manner of talking, but, when once he was started, he had plenty to say, and he was such a good fellow ! I suppose, taking him all in all, he was about the most popular man in the regiment. He was a tall, strong, well-built fellow, and he had one peculiarity—his hair was quite white, at seven-and-twenty, whilst his moustaches remained black. Why on earth he fixed his affections on little Kitty Mauleverer, the Colonel's daughter, is one of those problems that will remain for ever unsolved, but there was no doubt about the fact, and I suppose the only way to account for it is that we all do what we ought not to do in India !

Of course I can't say much against Mrs. Mauleverer, because it is a sort of unwritten law that one must not abuse one's Colonel's wife, but she was an awful woman, and I suppose Kitty took after her father, only what one calls weakness in a man, is only sweetness and gentleness in a girl. She was really a very pretty child, with fair, curly hair, and the pretty pink complexion that never survives an Indian summer, and, from the very first, she took to Dempster.

But when you talk of a girl like Kitty being in love, it is no more to be compared with the love of a man like Dempster, than water can be compared to wine. She used to fix her eyes upon the door at a ball, with an unmistakable look of anxiety in them, until Dempster appeared, when her eager, innocent smile would

meet his across the intervening space. After a time she never spoke to any other men at the sports or gymkhanas, and I must say she grew sweetly pretty under the influence of this first love.

But the dragon looked at the matter from an entirely different point of view. To do her justice, I think she was really fond of Kitty, and proud of her pretty complexion and bright eyes, but she had other views for her daughter than marriage with a penniless captain in an infantry regiment. She knew too much of the drudgery of such a life herself, for the Mauleverers were poor and proud, and all that could be saved out of the housekeeping went to the schooling of the boys at "home."

She really was very judicious ; she did not raise a spirit of opposition in Kitty by dropping Dempster in too violent a hurry, but she left off inviting him alone. There was no more sitting out in the moonlight with Miss Kitty on the Colonel's verandah, no more literary talks in the Club on the long spring evenings, no more walks home after tennis, and, as fortune, more or less, favours the brave, there appeared at this particular juncture, a most desirable winter visitor on the scenes. At first I don't believe that Mrs. Mauleverer ever looked on him in any other light than as a buffer between Dempster and Kitty, but he so soon showed symptoms of the same disease as Dempster's, that she might be forgiven if she fairly glowed with pride and satisfaction. For Unwin was in a very different category from any of us poor devils. He was a country gentleman, with a large estate and a good rent roll, and he had come out to gather facts about India, before contesting a seat at the next general election. He was a good fellow, too, and a gentleman. I am determined not to let my feeling for Dempster make me unjust to his rival, but I must say I felt the whole thing very keenly at the time. Little by little, in a clever and skilful manner, Dempster was pushed into the background, and Unwin was the central point of all the Colonel's parties. Instead of Dempster's taking Kitty into supper, he found he had the honour of escorting Mrs. Mauleverer—he was an "old friend," and it was Kitty's duty to be civil to the new-comers. "You understand," she said artfully, "and you don't mind, do you?"

"Yes, I *do* mind," I heard Dempster say once, "but I give up."

Mrs. Mauleverer laughed, as if it was a joke.

So the game went on, and was cleverly played on one side, at least ; but there was a great change in Dempster. I saw a good

deal of him at that time, and, though he never said a word, I am sure he knew that I understood. He used to come in from parade, and, as long as he was in public, he was as jolly and cheery as possible, but directly he was in his own room, the mask seemed to fall away, and he made no pretence of cheerfulness before me. There were little remembrances of Kitty about the room—not collected in one place, but littered about amongst his pipes and rackets. A bow from her shoe—a faded bunch of flowers—a little pencil case she gave him at Christmas. And yet we never mentioned her name, even in our most confidential moments, and it was only by a sort of intuition that I knew when the rival was dining at the Mauleverers', and Dempster was not.

We gave a dance in February, to which Miss Kitty came, of course, looking her very best and most brilliant self. Dempster was leaning against the door as she came in, and I thought he meant to let her pass, with the mere smile and bow he gave to others, but something seemed to touch him in the quick wistful look of her gentle eyes, for, without a word, he took her hand and laid it on his arm. "This waltz is *mine*," he said confidently, and he waltzed her away before the astonished eyes of her mother and Mr. Unwin. I saw them whirling round for a few minutes, and then I lost sight of them, and the evening was nearly over before I came across Miss Kitty again. Her cheeks were flushed, and her eyes very bright. She looked radiantly happy.

I asked her if she had enjoyed herself. "Enjoyed! It has been perfect—perfect," she said.

Dempster was quite excited too, when the whole thing was over. He was not the least inclined to go to bed, and to sleep like a reasonable creature, and he persuaded me to sit up with him and smoke a pipe.

As we smoked, he sobered down, and talked about many times and places—of starlight nights in Mexico, when he sat alone and watched the cattle on the hills—of old "shoots" in the Central Provinces, when he had brought down his first tiger, whose skin was the precious property of his old mother at home—of interesting cases in the hospital that he had been unable to leave, and also, very often, unable to save.

"That was the most interesting bit of my life," he said, as he rose and yawned, "that delicious feeling of doing good to somebody. Nothing of that kind here, old fellow. Waste—waste—waste."

"What would Miss Kitty say to that," I said.

He stared at me for a moment in silence.

"Poor little soul," he said gently at last, "what a queer world it is. Well, good-night to you, and good-bye to it all."

"Why good-bye?" I asked.

"Because one has to bow to fate," he said, looking back, with a queer, sad sort of smile, as he walked away.

PART II.

IT was the very next evening that one of our fellows came into the ante-room about seven o'clock, and said that the Colonel's daughter was ill. He did not know what was the matter—they seemed to think she had got cold at the dance, and had over-tired herself; but De Winton, who told us, was quite certain the doctor had been there twice. Dempster was sitting in a big armchair by the table, with a *Pioneer* in front of his face, and he did not move at first, but presently he put down the paper quietly on the table in front of him, and then turned sharply to De Winton.

"Did you see the Colonel?" he said; "did you see Forsythe?"

"I saw Forsythe, not the Colonel. He is awfully cut up. They say its diphtheria."

"There's a good deal about," said some one; "a bad sort too."

"It's a beastly illness."

"One suffers so."

All the talk went on carelessly round Dempster, but he remained immovable, with a curious, far-away look upon his face. Presently he got up quietly and walked away. De Winton stood silently looking after him.

"I didn't think of Dempster," he muttered to me. "Poor chap, he's hard hit."

He *was* hard hit. He was standing, bareheaded, on the verandah, when I went in to dress for dinner, and as I passed I meant to speak, but he looked so strange, that I only put out my hand and grasped his, and when I came out again, he was there in his mess dress, waiting for me, and we walked over to mess together.

The band was playing, for it was guest night, but the Colonel was not there.

When dinner was over, I saw Dempster slip away, unnoticed, as he thought, but I was waiting for him on the verandah as he came back.

There was some one else on the verandah too, leaning against a pillar. I did not notice who it was, until I saw Dempster's figure shadowed blackly in the moonlight, coming across the mess compound ; and the some one moved quickly in front of me, and went down to meet him. Then I saw that it was Unwin. He was one of the guests.

"How is she?" he said, without any pretence of surprise, or any apology for intrusion.

"Very bad, I think," said Dempster quietly. "The doctor will be there all night."

"Do you think I could be of any use?"

There was a pause.

"No, I think not! I offered. Unless, of course," with another slight pause, "you are more fortunate than I."

They turned and came in together. The band was still playing, and there was a good deal of talk going on. I fancy no one noticed them, but, as they passed me, I heard Unwin say abruptly, "Thanks, then I will take my chance; will you excuse my leaving?"

Dempster bowed in silence and went in, and the other man turned on his heel, and went out into the moonlight.

PART III.

NO one who has not experienced it, can understand the sudden gloom that the shadow of death throws over an Indian station. As exiles, we depend so much on each other, and feel such an un-English interest in each other's affairs, that the sorrow of one is almost the sorrow of all, and Miss Kitty's illness was a personal grief to every one. Tennis engagements were thrown up, dinners were postponed, and a perfect stream of carriages rolled in and out of the Colonel's compound, from about four till six every evening. The accounts got worse and worse, till we were all in a state of extreme tension; and, instead of going for his usual walk, Dempster used to potter about our compound, which was next door to the Colonel's, for hours at a time, hoping for the chance of being able to do anything for Kitty. It was the third day, and about five in the evening. The sun had got very low, and we knew that in about half-an-hour the brief twilight would be over, and the night would have fallen. I went up and joined him silently; I could not bear to sit on the verandah, and watch him

walking up and down, up and down, in that restless way. A minute afterwards Forsythe dashed out of the bungalow and hurried away. Dempster went after him, and caught him at the gate.

"What is it?" he said. "What's going on?"

Forsythe tried to push past, but Dempster's strong arm prevented him.

"Tell me," he said imperiously.

"It's as bad as it can be, old chap," said Forsythe huskily.

"I've done my best—God knows I've done my best."

"All you could?"

"Yes. I've just operated."

"Ah, and there was no relief?"

"None; it was beyond it."

Dempster drew Forsythe on one side, so that I should not hear, and began an eager questioning. Forsythe's words, when I next caught them, startled me. "No, you don't—not if I can help it. Don't be a fool, Dempster."

"I shall if I like," said Dempster coolly. "Here," to me, "hold this lunatic; I'm going over to the Colonel's bungalow."

Forsythe stood leaning against the gate, and did not attempt to follow him. As he reached the verandah, Dempster turned back and nodded, just as he had done that night after the ball.

I know nothing about medicine, and I hate the whole business. I don't want to know how I am made, nor how the machinery works. I had not the faintest idea of Dempster's fatal purpose; but Forsythe was positively raving.

"It's not a bit of good," he said to me angrily. "It never succeeds, not in nine cases out of ten. Dempster is an unmitigated ass, and I am a fool. Why didn't I stop him?"

I tried to point out, as well as the angry torrent of his words would allow me, that not even a lion in the way would have turned Dempster from his purpose, whatever it might be; but Forsythe only launched his anger and contempt at me, and went away at last, kicking up the tufts of grass with the toe of his boot, as if he had hoofs.

It was about half-an-hour afterwards that Dempster came back from the Colonel's bungalow. The sun had gone down, and everything was very grey. He walked slowly, with his head bent, and he started when I faced him in the narrow path.

"Well?" I said impatiently.

"Well!" he echoed; "she has fallen asleep."

"Why is Forsythe raging like a lunatic?" I said.

"I'm sure I don't know," said Dempster.

He was very white, and his voice was tired, as though he had gone through some great physical exertion or mental struggle. He put his hand on my shoulder, and we walked on together.

"I don't know what you have been doing," I said; "and I don't want to know. I hate diseases, but I *will* have you tell me if you have been running any risk."

"Any risk—of what?"

"Illness or death."

"I don't know—what does it matter? I never thought about it. I believe she will be safe now."

"That is worth it all, I suppose?" I said bitterly.

"Quite," he answered.

"And then, I suppose, you will marry her, and live happily ever afterwards?"

"Oh, no," he said. "Oh, no, certainly not. I have been shown my place too plainly."

"It will be different now."

"I could not take advantage of a generous impulse—even if it were," he said.

* * * * *

The bulletin next morning was much more favourable. Poor little Kitty had passed a quiet night, and had taken a turn for the better. The operation had been successful. The next day she was a little stronger, and had taken nourishment. On the third, all immediate fear was over, and her young vitality had triumphed. I shall never forget the poor old Colonel's face, as he stood in the ante-room, and spoke to Dempster. His hands trembled, and his mouth quivered under his thick moustache. Dempster was very quiet, and very white, as he had been since that other evening. He did not come home at all that night, although I was worried about him, and sat up late; but, at about six in the morning, I heard Forsythe on his pony in the verandah, battering at my door.

"Come, get up," he said. "I want you. The 'Missee Baba' is as fit as a fiddle this morning, but that ass Dempster is in hospital with diphtheria."

PART IV.

OF course by all the laws of fiction, and particularly by those that govern a short story, Dempster ought to have died, but he did not. He came about as near to the great unknown as it is possible to do, but he fought for his life, or, perhaps it would be more truthful to say, Forsythe fought for him, and he battled through. He was never unconscious from first to last, and his sufferings were very great, but he was a model patient, and I don't think that, for a long time, he cared the least bit in the world whether he lived or died. When I went to him every evening his eyes questioned me, before he was able to speak, and when I said "Going on all right," or "Out to-day driving," and at last "*Quite well*," it seemed as if he had got all he wanted out of the day.

For three long weeks he lay in that bare, cool room, between life and death—unable to move or speak, or to raise himself in bed, and for nights and nights Forsythe knelt beside him, holding his head, or with his fingers on his pulse, signing to me when to give him the stimulants or the nourishment he needed. The disease was not as virulent as in Miss Kitty's case, but his weakness was infinitely greater, and Forsythe thought it right to telegraph to his friends at home, and an answering telegram told us that his brother had started out to see him.

The Colonel came and sat beside him every day, quite bowed down with anxiety and worry, and after Miss Kitty's convalescence, I often saw the landau stopping at the hospital gates, and Mrs. Mauleverer sailing up the path, with a khitmutghar behind her, bearing jellies and creams—but Miss Kitty, who would have done the invalid more good than all the jellies and creams in creation, was always left in the landau!

Some one else was always in the landau too, with honest, eager eyes fastened on Kitty's face, listening for every gentle word that fell from her lips.

For Unwin was having *his* innings now, and I could not help noticing the pretty, coy turn of the girl's head as he leant over her carriage door at the races, or stood sentinel over her at the gymkhanas. It seemed to me as if it was a case, at last, of "*château qui parle*" and "*femme qui écoute*."

I did not say anything to Dempster, of course, until one day

he asked me straight out, and I had not time to invent a lie. I *did* think that the old woman had brought diplomatic pressure to bear, and I was quite certain that Kitty was a gentle, pliant little sapling in her hands, but when I saw Dempster's face, I hated her.

He lay silent for some minutes, and then he turned and looked me full in the face.

"It is quite right—from her point of view," he said huskily.

"I hate the whole lot," I said savagely.

"Don't," he said, as if my vehemence worried him ; "the hated rival is a good fellow after all."

Next evening when I went to the hospital, I passed the Mauleverers' carriage going at a foot's pace up the mall, with Unwin and Kitty alone inside. At the door of Dempster's room I was stopped by the orderly, who told me that the Colonel's wife was inside, so I stood kicking my heels in the general ward, until I heard her sailing down the corridor, and out at the door.

Then I went in to Dempster.

He was wrapped in a loose dressing-gown, and was lying in a long chair by the verandah door. The lamp had not been lit, and all the dim, dying sunlight was concentrated on his face. His hair had been cut very short, and he had been freshly shaved. He was always a smart-looking fellow, but as I saw him then, I could not help feeling, with a thrill, how a woman might have loved him. He turned his haggard eyes on me, and smiled.

"The game's up," he said ; "she has accepted him."

Oh, faithless Kitty! I ground out something between my teeth that I hardly wished Dempster to hear.

"It's all right," he said after a difficult pause ; "one can't live on nothing a year. She is to come and see me to-morrow, and the old woman warned me first."

"Do you think she is happy?"

"I don't know. I hope so—at least I *think* I hope so. In another life, in happier circumstances, I think, perhaps . . ."

His eyes wandered off to the horizon, and his words drifted away, but I finished the unfinished sentence for him. In another life, in happier circumstances, he knew that Kitty would have loved him!

Nothing would have induced me to be present at that next day's interview, except that Dempster himself asked me. Whether he was afraid for Kitty or himself I did not know, but it was very unpleasant for me.

He got up an hour earlier than usual, and discarded the dressing-gown, looking more thin and haggard than ever in his every-day clothes. He had to give in to the long chair and the cushions because he was quite unfit to sit up, and the arm-chair for Kitty was dragged up close beside him, with the tea-cups on a table between them. I went in and out on to the verandah, and got the tea, and treated them to as little of my company as possible.

Kitty, with her hair curling more than ever, in her sealskin jacket, and velvet hat, looked, I must say, sweetly pretty, and enough to disturb the peace of any anchorite ; but this poor St. Anthony was apparently quite unmoved. He did not hold her hand even as long as I should have done, and he laughed when the tears came into her eyes, and her poor little lips quivered at the sight of him.

"Oh !" said Kitty with a gasp, " how ill you look. You have been far, far worse than I was. I don't know how to tell you. I know all about it."

Dempster frowned. " They had no business to tell you. It was nothing. Many doctors do it, so as not to spoil a neat operation, and I am half a doctor, you know."

" Would you have done it to—any one ?" said Kitty, with the tears rolling down her soft cheeks.

" I daresay. I never saw a case before when it was needed."

" Are you getting well now ?" she said, leaning forward.

With a great effort he raised himself a little, and took her bare hand that was lying on her knee. I went out of the room, because I wanted to see if the kettle really boiled, and I did not trust the khit.

When I came back, they were both leaning back in their respective chairs, and Kitty was talking eagerly.

" Mother told you ? Yes, it is true. I don't want to be married, but I suppose one has to be some day."

" Yes," said Dempster steadily. " Unwin is a good fellow. I think you will be happy."

" I don't want to be happy," said Kitty with a sob ; " at least

I don't want to be married. Tell me, tell me, please, if I ought to."

Dempster put up his hand, to shade his eyes, and there was silence in the room for a minute. His old Waterbury on the table ticked like a human heart.

"Yes, I think you ought to," he said at last.

Poor St. Anthony!

"You *do*?" said Kitty, with a soft breath.

"Yes—dear."

"If," said Kitty, rising, and standing in the dusk, and speaking with a quiver of intense excitement in her soft little voice, "if there had been—any one else—who wanted me—that I might have loved, perhaps—"

There was another silence.

"Yes," said Dempster in a quiet voice; "if there had been any one else—who wanted you, whom you might have loved better, it would have been different."

Kitty sat down again, with her little soft pink hands laid upon her knee. They were trembling.

Dempster gave a sigh that was like a groan.

"Here, bring in the lamp, Fuseldeen," he said to the khit "and the kettle."

"You are tired?" said Kitty.

"Yes—very tired," he answered.

* * * * * *

Dempster's brother came out as soon as winds and waves could bring him, and took him home on a year's sick leave.

He did not stay for Kitty's wedding, and I do not think he even met her for some years afterwards. She is a pretty, fair, happy little matron now, with an adoring husband, and some pretty, fair, happy babies of her own.

Dempster is with us still, but he is always a rolling stone—an unsettled sort of fellow, with a great many aims in life, and no especial hobby. But all I can say is that, although we don't deal in moss in this heaven-forsaken country, he has gathered many other things about him, that seem to me to be of infinitely more importance.

GERALDINE BUTT.

More Things in Heaven and Earth.

By ELAINE A. SWIRE,

Author of "QUITS: A CUBAN ADVENTURE;" "A FORGOTTEN EPISODE OF THE REIGN OF QUEEN ELIZABETH."

A WILD December night at Shotover camp, rain falling in torrents, beating pitilessly on the half-frozen sentries, as they vainly sought to shelter themselves in their boxes. Inside the mess of Her Majesty's 200th regiment all was light and warmth; thick curtains closely drawn deadened the sound of the storm as it lashed the window-panes, a blazing fire diffused a grateful heat into the room. Everything indoors was in marked contrast to the cold and general discomfort that reigned outside. Some idea of this kind crossed the mind of the solitary occupant of this room as, pulling back the curtains, he saw the sloppy pavements and rivers of water that rushed along the gutters.

"What a miserable night," he exclaimed. "I'm precious glad I did not go to the kick-up; those fellows will be half-drowned before they get back."

And drawing the curtains closer he returned to the fireplace, where he ensconced himself in a deep armchair and began to smoke. The function he had alluded to in the above elegant terms, was a large dance given at one of the neighbouring country houses. Regimental business had detained Captain Ellis, and by the time he reached the mess, most of the officers had already dined and started. Not being a very keen dancer, he was not at all put out, so having enjoyed a solitary dinner he retired to the ante-room, where the opening of our story has found him. For some time he was alone, but at length the sound of an opening door aroused him from his reverie.

"Hullo, doctor, is that you? Come and have a smoke and tell me the news."

The doctor drew another chair up to the fire and stretched his hands out towards the blaze.

"No news that I know of," he answered. "I have been writing business letters all the afternoon and haven't left my quarters."

He looked so thoughtful and pre-occupied that Ellis said :

"I hope your business was not of a painful description."

"Well, it was rather," answered Dr. Cameron slowly. "Did you ever happen to meet Fendall, of the ——th?"

"No," replied Captain Ellis, "I have never met him, but I know a good many friends of his and have heard a good deal about him. Isn't he in a lunatic asylum?"

"*Was*," corrected the doctor. "One of the letters I received to-day was to inform me of his death in the asylum under most extraordinary circumstances. But then, if one begins to talk of extraordinary circumstances, nothing could be more strange than his life itself; poor fellow, he had a hard time of it."

"If it's anything in the shape of a yarn," said Ellis, "you might just as well spin it now; there's nothing else to be done unless we play cards."

"I don't mind telling you about it, more especially as it was never a secret; but I warn you that you will probably disbelieve the whole thing, although it is perfectly true."

"You are raising my curiosity to fever pitch," said Captain Ellis, laughingly. "Kindly begin at once, or I cannot answer for the consequences."

The doctor smiled and settling himself back into his chair began the following narrative :

"I must preface my story by saying that Fendall's family and mine were next-door neighbours in Blankshire and also distant connections by marriage; so that I know more about Roy Fendall's unhappy life than most people, more especially as he and I always hit it off pretty well together. When he joined his regiment and I went to walk the hospitals, we rather lost sight of one another, but always heard of each other's doings from our respective families. One fine day, some nine months after Roy had joined, I received a letter from one of my sisters, informing me of Roy's marriage, and adding that he was bringing his wife down to Fernleigh Hall to make the acquaintance of his family who had heard nothing about her until the wedding was actually over. This sounded rather odd, as Roy and his parents had, up till then, always been on the best of terms. I wrote and asked my sister to send me all the details of the affair, as I could not help thinking that it was a little mysterious. Connie, like the good soul she is, immediately sent me a budget

of news ; and indeed, if she was to be believed, there was plenty of material for gossip in everything concerning Mrs. Roy Fendall. It appeared that her maiden name was Varesco ; she was the daughter of an English-woman and an Armenian merchant of Odessa. Both her father and mother had died when she was a baby, leaving her to be brought up by her father's aunt, a certain Mrs. Arataria, who had an only son. Dina Varesco had run wild till she was fourteen years old ; at that age she was the acknowledged belle of Odessa, counted her admirers by the score, flirted with them, encouraged them, and threw them over with the *aplomb* of a woman of thirty. Mrs. Arataria, discovering that her son was beginning a violent flirtation with his beautiful cousin, sent the girl off to England to school and told the youthful lovers they must wait a few years until they really knew their own minds. The separation did not seem to tell much on Dina's spirits ; she had been at school for a couple of years when she met Roy Fendall at the house of a mutual friend. To see her was to admire her, and from that to loving her was but one step with poor Roy. He had only known her three weeks when he proposed to her, and she accepted him with an *insouciance*, which to any one less madly in love, would have argued badly for their matrimonial happiness. But he was simply in the last stage of infatuation, and could see no flaw in her anywhere. She insisted on their engagement being kept a secret, and also the wedding, on the plea that she hated a fuss, and succeeded in silencing all Roy's scruples. After the marriage, she graciously permitted him to inform his parents of the event, and after a certain amount of warfare on paper, Fendall *père* asked the newly-married couple to come and stay at Fernleigh.

" Dina's beauty took them all by storm, and she certainly was a most beautiful woman. She had inherited her mother's golden hair and wild-rose complexion, and her father's black almond-shaped eyes with their long covered lashes and finely-pencilled eyebrows. She was small and exquisitely formed, with the daintiest hands and feet, and the most bewitching little ears. But in spite of her beauty, her new relations could not get on with her ; they were full of the best intentions, but Dina's manner somehow chilled and estranged them. She had such a curious way of gliding noiselessly into the room just when she was least wanted, and they could never tell how much or how little she had

heard. Sometimes her beautiful dark eyes had a positively wolfish gleam in them, and her sisters-in-law and even her husband seemed to feel as if she had something uncanny about her. When she at last left to accompany Roy to Malta with his regiment, they were all unfeignedly relieved to see the last of her, but they were full of anxiety on Roy's account. It was curious how they all seemed to have made up their minds that Roy would suffer in some way from his connection with her. A year passed, however, without anything taking place to justify their alarm. At last, one day a letter came from Roy, saying that Dina's cousin and former lover Mr. Arataria, had come to Malta on business matters, and as he was likely to stay some time, they had asked him to share their house, which was a good deal larger than they required. Roy did not say much about him, but the general impression of the Fendall family, was that he was not particularly fond of his cousin by marriage. From time to time Roy mentioned that Malta did not seem to agree with him, as he was frequently subject to fainting fits ; he also said that Dina's cousin was still with them. Dina herself never wrote, as she considered it was far too much bother. When the regiment had been at Malta some eighteen months, it was ordered on to India. Mr. Arataria announced his intention of going too ostensibly to see if he could not extend his business. He could not, of course, obtain a passage in the troopship, so went by a P. and O. steamer. While at sea Roy's fainting fits ceased entirely, but soon after he had settled down in India with Arataria once more as their guest, they began again. Things went on like this for about a year ; the Fendalls received very few letters from their son, and those that reached them filled them with anxiety. Eventually they heard nothing for two or three months, and Mrs. Fendall was beside herself with apprehension.

"One evening, the front door bell rang and on going to open it, the old butler was confronted by the apparition of a man so worn, and haggard, and emaciated, that it was with the greatest difficulty he recognized Roy Fendall.

"'Master Roy !' he exclaimed. 'Beg pardon, Captain Fendall, sir, is that you ? My mistress will be shocked to see you like this. Have you been ill, sir ?'

"Roy smiled faintly, and taking the old man's arm, dragged himself wearily through the hall on to a sofa in the library, where

he sank down exhausted. His mother was hastily summoned, and after applying restoratives for some time, he revived and was able to speak.

"Where is Dina, my dear boy?" asked Mrs. Fendall. "What on earth possessed her to allow you to travel alone in this state?"

"At his wife's name, Roy turned deadly pale, glanced hastily round the room and put his hand to his neck with a queer kind of clutching movement.

"Hush, mother," he said hurriedly. "Don't talk about her." And pulling his mother's head down to his face, he said in a whisper, "Send the girls away and let me tell you while I can—before I go mad or she kills me."

Mrs. Fendall's astonishment was unbounded, as you may well imagine, but controlling herself as well as she was able, she dismissed her daughters, and begged Roy to explain his mysterious speech. Far into the night they sat, and the mother's heart turned sick with dread and anxiety as she listened to her son's monstrous tale.

It seemed that from the day that the Armenian cousin had appeared on the scene, everything in the Fendall household had gone wrong. Dina, never demonstrative at the best of times, became colder and colder in her manner to her husband, and finally so indifferent that Roy felt bound to say something to her about it; suggesting at the same time that Mr. Arataria's absence would be very desirable. Mrs. Roy listened to his remarks without moving a muscle. When he had finished, she slowly raised her long lashes and looking at him with an ominous glitter in her black eyes, replied in a clear, metallic voice: "If you ever dare to speak to me on the subject again, I shall leave you and you will never see me again." The words in themselves were not much, but the look and manner which accompanied them were so hateful and venomous that Roy felt a cold chill passing through him.

"I wish you could have seen that look, mother," he said wearily. "There was nothing human about it. Ashamed of my momentary terror, I was about to expostulate with her, but she left the room and managed to avoid being left *tête-à-tête* with me for several days. From that day forward, our household became most uncomfortable. Dina ignored my presence systematically, even when her cousin was in the room; to do him justice,

Arataria was always scrupulously polite to me, and his ready tact filled up many an awkward gap in our conversation. Still, I was fully aware that he knew of my disagreement with my wife; and at times I caught him gazing at me with an indefinable glance, which I also saw in Dina's eyes whenever I managed to intercept her looks. It was a perfectly indescribable expression, but it always made me feel quite helpless as if I were a victim under the knife and they were the executioners. I bore with this state of things for some time, and at length once more suggested to my wife the propriety of Mr. Arataria seeking a domicile of his own. Never in my life shall I forget the scene that followed. I had always felt that my wife's real character was a sealed book to me, but I then discovered what lay beneath her placid and impassive exterior. White as death, her eyes gleaming and her scarlet lips drawn tightly across her teeth till she looked more like a she-wolf than a woman, she stood and stormed at me for an hour. I felt so sick at heart to think that this furious vixen was really my delicate, dainty, ethereal wife, that I did not even hear what she said. Having at length exhausted her rage, she turned to go; but on reaching the door, she stopped and hissed out between her teeth: "The day he leaves this house, I leave it too; and then beware!"

"I sank into a chair and sat staring at the door, wondering if by any chance I had taken leave of my senses! Gradually, my stunned amazement gave way and I found myself recalling with disgust Dina's invectives and abuse. What could have caused her sudden dislike to me? For, like all men, I felt certain she had loved me once. What was the secret of Arataria's influence over her? What measures had I better take to rid myself of him without provoking a repetition of such a scene? These and other thoughts whirled confusedly through my mind until, worn out with bootless speculations, I fell asleep. It was dusk when I awoke, and as I sat still for a moment wondering why I should have been sleeping in the drawing-room, the door opened and I heard Arataria's voice in the passage saying, "You can begin to-night!"

"The door closed and somebody came to the window where I was sitting.

"It was Dina. "Are you awake, Roy?" she asked in her clear, cold voice, from which all traces of her previous anger had

vanished. Her tone sent a shiver through me, I don't know why.

"I answered, "Yes," adding, "I suppose it is time to dress for dinner," at the same time rising and leaving the room without giving her an opportunity of saying anything more. All the time I was dressing, I kept wondering what the meaning of Arataria's remark could have been. *What* will she begin to-night? I said to myself over and over again without finding any possible answer.

"When I came down to dinner, I thought I had never seen my wife look so lovely. She was a little pale, the result no doubt of her rage in the afternoon, and the filmy black dress she wore only enhanced the whiteness of her skin. Her velvety eyes gleamed like diamonds and her full red lips were even more strikingly red compared to her pale face and black dress. In manner, she was perfect and quite like the Dina of our honeymoon days. I began to think that the quarrel of the afternoon existed only in my imagination; now and again, however, I caught her exchanging glances with Arataria, curiously eager, expectant, longing looks, which puzzled and alarmed me. What could she be longing for? What had she to expect? The bewilderment in which I was kept me very silent at dinner. Dina and her cousin on the contrary were extremely gay and talkative, and their air of good-fellowship and secret understanding annoyed me more than ever. I was angry with myself for occupying such a false position; and yet I could see no immediate way out of it. The dreadful paralyzed and helpless sort of feeling which always overcame me whenever I caught Arataria's steady gaze fixed on me was terrible. I *could* not own to myself that I was frightened of him, and yet it was something uncommonly like it. And, even granting that it was so, what cause had I to fear him? I thought and thought, but I saw no solution to the problem. After dinner, we went as usual to the drawing-room, coffee having been served; Dina, to my great astonishment, opened the piano and asked if I would like her to sing. She possessed a really lovely voice which had been trained to a high pitch of perfection, but, on ordinary occasions, no persuasion would induce her to open her lips; even when we were first married it was only as a great favour that she would occasionally sing to me. Later on, the fact that I was devoted

to music seemed to be sufficient to prevent her ever singing a note. So you may guess my utter surprise at this unusual occurrence. I took it as a good omen and replied that I should be enchanted if she would favour us with a song or two. I threw myself down on the sofa and listened with half-closed eyes to the ravishing sounds. Arataria was sitting on the other side of the room and, although I could not see him, I *felt* that he was watching me with that steady, pitiless gaze of his. Worn out by the excitement of the day and soothed by the exquisite "timbre," of Dina's voice, which had a liquid ring in it, suggestive of a physical caress, I soon fell fast asleep, but not to rest ; a dream as torturing as the events of the day racked my brain and exhausted my body. At first, I dreamt I was in a fairy-like garden ; the scent of flowers, the song of birds, the trickling of a thousand little streams and a radiant roseate glow over everything combined to delight my senses. Suddenly I beheld Dina, her arms stretched out toward me, a divine smile on her lips and the love-light in her eyes, just as I had seen it in earlier, happier days, or had *fancied* I saw it. I ran to clasp her to my heart, but as I advanced she retreated, her azure draperies floating round her slender body. All at once she turned and flung herself into my arms, covering me with her gauzy garments. As I pressed my lips to hers, I fancied that her filmy coverings seemed thicker ; slowly their azure colour faded, and Dina's yielding figure slipt from my embrace, leaving me enveloped in a thick grey mist which could be *felt*. Thicker and thicker it grew, until my arms seemed bound to my sides, and my legs were stiff and heavy. In vain I tried to extricate myself ; choked and suffocated, I gasped for air ; my head swam, my very life seemed to be draining from me, when again I felt the velvety touch of Dina's lips on mine ; then a horrible, sharp, stinging pain in my neck, as if two red-hot needles had been plunged into it, and with a cry I awoke to find Arataria standing by my side, holding my wrist in his fingers and a smelling bottle in his hand. Dina was sitting in a low chair a little way off, playing nervously with a scarlet hand screen. Her face was colourless, save for two bright red spots on her cheek bones, which burned feverishly, vying with the dewy scarlet of her lips. They both asked if I felt better, and Dina told me that at first they thought I had fallen asleep, and had not wished to disturb me, but on seeing my complete

immobility they became alarmed, and looking more closely, discovered that I had fainted. I assured them that I was all right, and rose from the sofa intending to go to bed. I was so weak that Arataria had to help me.

"Some three weeks after this we were ordered to India, and once there I became a perfect martyr to these fainting fits. Regularly once or twice a week they occurred, invariably preceded by the same dream and the same painful awakening with the stinging sensation in my neck. Tonics of all kinds were prescribed by the doctors, but were of no use, and they soon began to shake their heads, saying that nothing but leaving India would do me any good. The curious thing was that Dina was always at the piano whenever these attacks occurred, until it became quite a joke. Whenever I saw her preparing to play or sing, I used to laugh and say, "I suppose you want me to faint, Dina."

"Strangely enough she was never angry, but took it all in good part; she had become much more gentle and loving since my first attack in Malta. She had been growing so much prettier of late, too, and it seemed that while I grew more and more of a wreck, she became far more beautiful. Never had she been so lovely nor so affectionate. Tenderly solicitous of me, she surrounded me with the most watchful care; *too* watchful it seemed to me, for my invalid fancy thought it detected in her soft eyes a glance like that of a bird of prey intent on its victim. But I dared not breathe my vague suspicions to a living soul, for had I done so I should have been called a madman, so completely had she fascinated everybody in the place, from the doctors downwards. And, indeed, to all outward appearance, she was a model wife; so devoted had she become that she would even sing without being asked. I grew to loathe the sound of her thrilling, soul-subduing voice, all the more so that whenever I fainted it was, as I have already said, when she was singing, though what connection there could be between these two things was difficult to divine! One morning, whilst dressing, I suddenly noticed on my neck two small red marks, close together. I had never seen them before, and put them down to the bite of an insect of some sort, more especially as they looked as if they were of several days' standing, and thus dismissed the matter from my mind. That evening I fainted again, but forbear de-

scribing the scene, as everything was an exact *replica* of the first occasion. Had they not been so painful, the attacks would have been monotonous. The queer thing about them was Dina's invariable state of suppressed excitement on my recovery. Her tender anxiety, combined with the steely glitter of her dark eyes and Arataria's cold, curious stare, made me feel certain that something extraordinary was taking place. But *what* could it be? In vain I racked my brain to find some solution. If I had been naturally superstitious, it would have been easy to say that I was a victim of witchcraft practised by my wife and her cousin, and one day that idea *had* flashed across my mind. But, being an Englishman, I laughed at my own folly. The next morning, moved by an unaccountable impulse, I looked at my neck to see if the red marks had disappeared ; to my surprise, they were still there and looked quite fresh and vividly scarlet, as if they had just been made. I sat and looked at them in the glass, thinking in a dull sort of way that they were just in the place where I always felt the stinging sensation on recovering from my faints. One idea after another came crowding to my mind. Why were those marks so red ? Yesterday they had been quite healed—now they were scarlet and seemed wet!—nearly as scarlet as Dina's cheeks, red as Dina's lips ! Why should they be so close together ? It was like the mark of a serpent's fang. Arataria was rather like a serpent ; his cruel eyes were enough to paralyze anybody ! How lovely Dina was growing ! Why were her lips so red ? Red as blood!—“Blood,” I repeated half aloud with a shudder, glancing hastily round the room, half expecting to see Arataria or Dina looking at me, but finding myself still alone. Slowly I finished dressing, trying to shake off the dreadful thoughts that assailed me, but in vain. All day they haunted me, assuming more definite shape until the horror of my own ideas seemed to be driving me mad. Half-forgotten stories of my childish days revived in my memory. Stories of witches, of lingering deaths, of the evil eye, of vampires. I made up my mind I would watch the little marks very carefully, and perhaps that would help me to solve the horrible mystery that seemed to envelope me. Night and morning I looked at them, and in a day or two they were healed, and had the dull red look they had worn when I had first noticed them. The next evening I fainted once more, and on going to my room I went straight to the glass A

cry escaped my lips! The marks were quite fresh, and from one was oozing a tiny drop of blood! I recalled the stinging sensation which invariably preceded my recovery, and even as I thought about it I seemed to feel it again, and saw a second tiny drop issue from the other little wound. How long I sat staring at my livid, horror-stricken face I do not know, but at last I flung myself on my bed to try and snatch a few minutes' relief from the ghastly thoughts which were haunting me. At dawn I rose and began putting together the things I should require for my journey to England, for I had determined to leave at once, without seeing Dina and her partner in crime. As early as possible I called on the general commanding the station, and had a private conversation with him, the upshot of which was that I got leave to go that very day, the pretext being urgent private affairs. Fortunately for my plans, the mail steamer was to leave Bombay the next day. I returned to my house, and, ordering the carriage, started for the station, without inquiring whether Dina had returned from her morning ride or not. The next night found me on board the homeward-bound steamer, and it was with a sigh of relief that I heard the waves lapping against her sides, for I had a kind of feeling that, do what I would, I should not be able to escape from the clutches of the guilty pair.'

"With a sigh of exhaustion Roy sank back on the sofa, as he ended his dreadful history. Mrs. Fendall's feelings are easier to imagine than to describe. She could hardly credit her own ears, and terrible doubts as to her son's sanity crossed her mind.

"Roy seemed to guess her thoughts, for he suddenly said :

" 'I am not mad, mother, though I confess it seems rather like it ; but just look here.'

"Unfastening his collar, he pointed to his neck. Just above the collar bone were two little red marks, quite faint and somewhat larger than the mark left by a pin prick.

" 'I have not had any fainting fits since I left India, and the scars have gradually grown less distinct. I used to look at them every day on board ship to make sure.'

"He closed his eyes again with a weary sigh, and for about ten minutes neither of them spoke.

"Mrs. Fendall was terribly agitated by all she had just heard, and scarcely knew what to think or what to say.

“Suddenly Roy started up, and flinging up his arms across his face, cried out : ‘Here she is ! Oh, mother, save me !’

“Whether it was fancy or not, one cannot say, but Mrs. Fendall declares she saw a cloudy, shapeless form hanging over the sofa, close to Roy’s head. As she looked she seemed to see the outline of a gigantic bat with outstretched wings, evolving itself from the nebulous mass ; but instead of a bat’s head she saw Dina’s face, her red lips drawn up in a wolfish snarl, her eyes distorted with a bloodthirsty glitter. Nearer and nearer the loathsome monster came, when just as it seemed to be sinking down and enveloping Roy in its misty folds, Mrs. Fendall struck at it with a heavy ivory paper-cutter, which lay on a small table near her. The face vanished, the mist suddenly cleared away, and nothing remained of the dreadful vision.

“On looking at Roy, his mother found that he had fainted. Summoning assistance, she had him removed to a bedroom that had been prepared for him, and restoratives were applied.

“When he recovered, he said : ‘Did you see her, mother?’

“Mrs. Fendall, who could not trust herself to speak, nodded fearfully.

“‘Well, you have saved me this time, but she is sure to come back.’

“Even as he spoke, Mrs. Fendall’s eye was caught by the unusual appearance of one of the corners of the room. She thought she detected the same filmy cloud hanging there that she had already seen downstairs, but on approaching it nothing was visible. On resuming her seat at the bedside, it reappeared, and from that moment the Fendalls’ house was never free from the mysterious thing. Whatever room Roy was in, one corner of it was darkened by this cloudlike mass. Once or twice a week the same scene would occur which had taken place on the night of his arrival. Sometimes the apparition had Dina’s face, sometimes Arataria’s, and on some occasions both together would glare from out the misty apparition with looks of diabolical hatred.

“This went on for some months, and then Roy had to be removed and placed in an asylum. He had a horror of being left alone, and the strictest injunctions were given by his family that an attendant should be with him night and day.

“He died about six months after entering the asylum, and his death was attended by a very strange incident.

" Seeing that the end was coming, his attendant went to ring the bell that summoned the doctor. It happened to be outside the door, a few yards down the passage. When the man returned Roy was dead, and on his neck were two little tiny scars, from which the blood was slowly oozing ; only a drop at a time, but as fast as it was wiped away, another took its place, and this went on until the coffin was nailed down.

" Nothing more was ever heard of Dina or her cousin. The bungalow in which they had lived got the reputation of being haunted, and no native would go near it after dusk, for they declared that shrieks and groans were heard there all night, and terrible creatures were seen.

" Of course I can't pretend to explain the story, and most people say that Roy was the victim of a delusion. If so, it was a delusion that was shared by everybody who entered the Fendalls' house, for the curious shapeless cloud was visible to anybody who went into a room where Roy happened to be. But I shall have to let you find a solution for yourself, as I see it's two o'clock, and I must turn in ; so good-night, old chap, I shall leave you to dream of the fair Dina."

" Heaven forbid," replied Captain Ellis so seriously, that the doctor went away laughing.

A Jungle Legend.

I.

I HAD long been looking forward to my Christmas holidays of the year 188—, as I saw my way to revisiting a favourite hunting ground, in hills where, in years gone by, I had often enjoyed the delightful recreation of sambur stalking.

As I expected to be in camp about ten days, and as I am not one of those who hold that good sport can only be obtained at the sacrifice of all, or nearly all, the creature comforts of civilization, I had provided myself with all necessary camp comforts for myself and followers, not forgetting the orthodox “fixings” for my Christmas dinner.

Behold me, therefore, seated at the door of my hut (tents are hardly ever necessary on these hills) looking out on to the night of the “feast of Stephen,” like good King Wenceslaus of old, but, I fear, without the charitable thoughts of that amiable monarch. A bright moon is shining in a clear sky; a roaring fire and an ulster counteract the chilliness of what little land wind there is; my cheroot is well under weigh; my camp is in a well-chosen, picturesque spot, in a deep gully, at the junction of two sparkling streams, with a few trees overhead; the sambur may be heard belling—but, hold! this is just what cannot be heard, and therein lies all the mischief; the few days I had already been in camp had been sufficient to convince me that the one thing most necessary to insure the success of the expedition, viz., game, was conspicuous by its absence.

“Boy, tell old Soonderapandi I want to speak to him.”

In due course the old fellow turned up, wrapped in his cumbly (blanket), and stood staring into the fire, gently rubbing one leg against the other, after the manner of the contemplative native.

We were friends of many years’ standing, this dried-up old savage and I, and had been able to do each other a good turn every now and again; my favours had taken the form of protecting him and his from the avarice of my forest subordinates; while he had put me up to more than one wrinkle in woodcraft, and had stood by me like a man at a pinch when desertion would have left me in a very awkward fix.

"Well, Soonderapandi," I said, "this a bad business ; with the exception of that one hind, not a head of game to be seen, and hardly a track less than ten days old. How do you account for it ? "

"The wild dogs, Dorai (master)," he replied.

"But," I objected, "the wild dogs do not appear to me to be sufficient to account for so sudden a disappearance of all the game ; we have been over a good deal of the ground, and have seen two or three of the pools, and there is not a carcase to be seen ; we must surely have come across some carcases if the wild dogs had been playing havoc with the game."

To this argument I received no reply, and, to judge by the old fellow's stolid look, it made but little impression on him.

"I understood from the peon whom I intrusted with my message to you that you had sent some of your people up here within the last three weeks, and they reported as much game as ever."

"That was true, Dorai, except that I did not send any one up. I came myself, and there were stags to be seen all over the place."

I smoked on in silence for some time, and Soonderapandi might, to all appearance, have forgotten what he was talking about ; presently, however, he asked : "Did Dorai notice anything strange about the wild dogs we saw chasing the hind to-day ? "

"Well, at first I thought they were enormous, but then I saw that I had been mistaken as to the size of the hind, and that she was not full-grown, but only a young one."

"Dorai was not mistaken about the size of the hind ; she was full-grown ; I ascertained that when I crossed the swamp and saw her tracks."

"Then how big were the dog's tracks ? As big as a tiger's, eh ? "

"If Dorai laughs at me how can I tell what I know ? "

"All right, Soonderapandi ; I won't laugh at you, so fire away."

"*The dogs left no tracks.*"

Whew ! Now I'm in for it ! "Here, boy, bring the cheroots."—"Now, Soonderapandi, help yourself, and then tell me all you know about those dogs."

'Hurry no man's cattle,' is an excellent motto, and one that should be borne in mind when getting information from a hillman, as his brain is a sorry steer which requires coaxing but will not be driven. So while Soonderapandi is tearing off a hunch from one of my cheroots, and reducing it to the required state of pulp, I shall have plenty of time to acquaint the reader with the details of the wild-dog incident referred to.

I had been in camp some days, and we had been wandering fruitlessly about in search of game, but finding none, not even any tracks under ten days old. In the afternoon of the day of which I am writing I had thrown myself down in disgust under the shade of some bushes on the side of a long ravine, narrow and steep at the top end, and gradually widening out lower down ; there was a large sholah (detached jungle) at the bottom, and altogether the place looked like the picture of a "sure find" for sambur.

I told Soonderapandi to go round the head of the ravine, where there was a small pool, and up the opposite hill, which overlooked another good bit of country, to see if he could see anything. Meanwhile the coolie with the tiffin basket improved the occasion by curling himself up and going sound asleep.

Soonderapandi trudged off, and I watched him climb laboriously up the opposite hill and disappear over the top. He had been gone about twenty minutes, when suddenly a hind sambur came round a bend of the hill he was on, about a quarter of a mile to the west. Almost as soon as the sambur came into sight a red object appeared, which at the first glance I took for a tiger, but soon saw was a couple of wild dogs running close together, a little above and almost on even terms with the hind ; soon afterwards four more dogs appeared in couples, two a little below and to the rear of the hind, and two following on her tracks.

I got out my glass and watched the chase, and my attention was soon attracted to some very unusual features it presented. In the first place, the dogs appeared to be half as large again as the largest I had ever seen before ; I didn't think so much of this at the time, as wild dogs vary considerably in size, a fact which has led to much dispute among sportsmen and naturalists as to whether there is more than one variety ; and moreover at such a distance I thought I had probably misjudged the size of the

sambur. In the next place, all the dogs looked perfect patriarchs, gaunt and grizzled; there was not a youngster among them. Then it was clear that the chase had been going on for some time, and though the hind was very beat the dogs were going as easily as possible. I expected every moment to see one of them canter up to her and seize her by the loose skin of the groin, which is usually the first point of a wild dog's attack (it is not, I fancy, till the victim is at bay for the first time that the eyes are torn out), but no such thing happened. I looked the hind carefully over with my glass, but could not see a sign of injury anywhere about her.

The hind was evidently heading for the pool at the top of the ravine, and the only way that I could account for the mysterious behaviour of the wild dogs was by supposing that, knowing they had their victim at their mercy, they intended to pull her down at their leisure when she came to bay in the shallow pool, rather than run the risk of an unnecessary kick or two from her sharp hoofs if they attacked her as she was going. Perhaps the sybarites thought some liquor with their feast might not be a bad thing.

By the time I had made these observations the chase had come nearly opposite, and it was high time for me to be making a move if I wanted to be in at the death, which I did very much —of the wild dogs.

The coolie snored peacefully on and I took good care not to disturb him, but got hold of my Express and 10-bore smooth-bore, put two hollow-fronted bullets into the former and two charges of B B into the latter, and with one in each hand made straight for the pool. I had no fear of being seen as the hind and wild dogs were much too intent on each other to be likely to notice me at such a distance.

I had not gone far when Soonderapandi suddenly appeared on the sky-line, a little above the line the hunt must take; he had not seen what was going on but had seen me, and evidently thought something was up, as he was standing still watching me. I held up my hand and he dropped out of sight into the grass like a well-broken setter. A few moments sufficed to bring me under the shelter of some large stones within about thirty yards of the pool, and I had not long to wait before the hind came round the bend with the dogs close on her at full cry, if such a term can be applied to a pack running absolutely mute!

The hind did not make for the water as I expected she would, but floundered somewhat in the mud near the edge. "Now," I thought, "they will pull her down;" but to my amazement she was allowed to recover herself, and before I had got over my astonishment she and four of the dogs had disappeared round the corner. I pulled myself together in time to fire rather a hurried shot at one of the last pair of dogs, and saw my bullet kick up the dust just beyond him; had it been a solid bullet I should have thought it had gone through him, but as it was a hollow-fronted one and the dog made no sign I concluded I had missed. I ran after them in hopes of another shot, but the ground was broken and I saw no more of them.

When I returned Soonderapandi was sitting on the stone I had just left, apparently buried in thought.

"Well, Soonderapandi, that was a bad business," I said, alluding to my having let all the wild dogs go, when I had confidently hoped to account for four of the destructive brutes at least.

"A very bad business," he agreed; but it will be seen that his thoughts were running in a very different direction.

We returned to the coolie with the tiffin basket; he was still slumbering peacefully and talking in his sleep. I caught the words "chuckram" (the coin of the country) and "aree" (rice). I dispelled the sweet vision with the butt end of my rifle and we all trudged disconsolately back to camp.

II.

"Now, Soonderapandi, if you are ready to tell me all you know about those wild dogs I am ready to listen."

"Does Dorai recollect one day last year, when we were out shooting on the cliff to the south, saying that far bit of jungle would do well for tea, and you would recommend some of your friends to apply for it if only it were nearer to a road?"

"I remember perfectly; you mean that valley with the grass hills above it to the east; well—what about it?"

"Does Dorai think that is virgin forest or karlai (secondary growth)?"

"Well, I should have said it was virgin forest."

"It isn't, then; it is karlai, and I can tell you who cultivated it; it was cultivated by my people in the time of my great-grand-

father. During that time the bamboo was in seed, and it has seeded twice since then."

"Hold on, Soonderapandi ; I must think over that." And here I made a mental calculation. The bamboo is popularly supposed to seed once in seventy years, and it last seeded towards the end of the great famine—say 1777 to 1779—so this would put the date when this forest was under cultivation at about 1737 to 1739. "All right ; now go on."

"Our people did not cultivate it for themselves, but for a Dorai ; he was not an Englishman, but a Vendise Dorai (Dutchman). At first he was very kind to our people ; he used to shoot lots of game with his long gun, and the land gave good crops. One day he caught some fish out of the sacred pool at the pagoda ; my great-grandfather warned him not to do so, and said if he did that Iapen (the god of the jungle) would be very angry. But the Dorai said he didn't care for Iapen and would do what he liked.

"That night Iapen appeared to him and cursed him, telling him that if he didn't leave the jungles at once he would never leave them at all. The Dorai was a brave man and paid no heed to Iapen's threat.

"From that time the crops began to fall off, and the jungle, which before had been quite healthy, got feverish ; many of our people, who stopped to work for the Dorai, died. At last he was left quite alone and had to abandon the clearings, and they have never been cultivated since.

"From this time the Dorai lived on those grass hills in the middle of the jungle. For some time he got on all right there, as there were plenty of sambur, but at last he got tired of living all alone and tried to come away. But a man cannot leave those hills without travelling two or three days through forest, and whenever the Dorai tried to come away, he got such a bad attack of fever the first night that he had to go back again—so he has lived there ever since."

"What !" I exclaimed, "do you mean to say he is there now ? "

"Yes, he is there now, and that is why there are no sambur here."

I didn't quite see the connection, but thought it best to say as little as possible, and let the old fellow tell his story in his own way.

"He had killed nearly all the sambur, and was getting in a very bad way when, one night, Iapen appeared to him again,

and said, 'I want you to help me ; I am in trouble ; and if you do what I wish I will take off part of your punishment and will help you.' The Dorai replied, 'If I help you will you let me get through that cursed jungle and get away?' Iapen said, 'No, certainly not, because I may want your assistance again ; but this I will do : I will give you the means of getting enough to eat and drink always.' The Dorai would not agree to this at first ; but finding that Iapen was resolved, and knowing that his supply of powder was getting low, he thought it best to give in, and asked what he was required to do.

"Iapen said, 'On those grass hills away to the north there is a path leading to my pagoda, which is haunted by a man-eating tiger that has come up from the plains. He has killed so many of the pilgrims on their way to my shrine that none now dare come. I want you to kill that tiger, and if you will try to do so I will let you pass through the jungle without fear, but when you have done so you must return here. You see that pointed hill? That is to the north of the path ; you must not go beyond that hill, nor must you cross a large river there is to the east. If you attempt to get away it will be the worse for you. Beware!' Iapen began to vanish, but the Dorai called out to him, 'Suppose I do what you wish, how will you provide me with food?' 'That is my business,' said Iapen, and vanished."

Here Soonderapandi gave me a long-winded account of how the Dutchman slew the tiger, with which I will not weary my readers, but will let him take up his story from the point where it more nearly concerns this legend.

"Having killed the tiger and finding himself safe beyond the dreaded jungle, the Dorai determined to break faith with Iapen and return to his own country.

"With this idea he got up early in the morning, packed up the tiger skin and the rest of his belongings and started off along the path that leads to the north. He had gone some two or three miles, and was just beginning to think he had escaped, when he saw six wild dogs on the path before him. He expected them to fly at his approach, but instead of that they came towards him, snarling and showing their teeth. He tried to frighten them away and fired a shot, but at this they became furious and rushed at him, and he had to run before them along the path by which he had been travelling. He expected every

minute to be torn in pieces, but when he at last found time to look round he found, to his surprise and relief, that the dogs, though following him leisurely, had apparently given up all idea of attacking him.

"When the Dorai came to a spot where a second path crossed the one he was on he struck off to the east ; no sooner had he done so than two of the wild dogs instantly rushed at him, and, hunting him back to the path he had left, compelled him to continue his journey southward. Twice again did he try to leave the path, but each time he was brought back in the same way, and finally forced to return to his camp beyond the jungle, the one in which he had lived before Iapen sent him to kill the tiger. When they had done their work the pack disappeared into the jungle.

"Utterly wearied and disheartened the Dorai threw himself down on his bed of grass, and was soon sound asleep. During the night Iapen again appeared to him : 'Ha ! ha !' said he, 'you thought you could trick the god of the jungles, even if you could not defy him. Now you must see you are in my power. Hear your doom, and be thankful it is no worse. Here you shall remain ready to obey my orders whenever I may have need of your miserable services. But that you may not starve, poor wretch, the birds, beasts, fish and fruit of the jungle shall be yours. The wild dogs that so lately hunted you shall now hunt for you, and bring you the game you cannot seek yourself.'

"So spoke Iapen, and here the story ends. Dorai will now understand why he did not kill the dog he fired at to-day, and why the hind was not pulled down. Those were no ordinary dogs, but the pack that Iapen allows to hunt for the Dutch Dorai, and when the game where he is runs short, they come over here and drive the sambur across the jungle to him."

"Well, Soonderapandi," I said, "that is a very wonderful story and fully accounts for everything ; but the point now is, what is to be done ? If, as you say, the good gentleman has been poaching on our preserves, I don't see why we should not go and do a little poaching on his. What do you say ?"

"For myself I have no fear. Iapen is kind to us children of the jungles, but the fever may kill Dorai."

"Oh ! I'll chance that," I said, and so the matter was settled. It would never do for us forest officers to be over-cautious about fever.

It was clearly of no use to remain where we were, and the game might, as Soonderapandi supposed, have migrated to the grass hills in the middle of the jungle. In any case, game or no game, we should be going over ground hitherto unexplored by Europeans, barring of course Soonderapandi's mythical friend, the Dutchman. Finally, my curiosity (or shall I confess it? my superstition) was just the least bit piqued by the strange story I had just heard told with such childlike faith and simplicity, and which had apparently received a certain amount of confirmation from the incident which had come under my own observation that very afternoon.

Accordingly, on the following morning, we made an early start, my loads having been made as light as possible, everything that was not absolutely necessary being left in camp, in charge of a peon. The greater part of the day was spent in marching. Our route lay most of the way through virgin forest, along wide paths kept open by generations of elephants. Here and there a little clearing had to be done, and occasional halts had to be made to allow the coolies to rest, and rid themselves of the leeches, which attacked them in scores.

Right glad were we all when, at about four o'clock, we emerged on to the grass land, and knew that our troubles were over for the time. There was no occasion to hunt about for a suitable camping-ground; there, before our eyes, was a spot hard to beat—a flat piece of grass land, with jungle on three sides of it, and a lovely river on the fourth; immediately in front of us a long stretch of fordable shallows, with dark, deep, sluggish pools at either end. Beyond the river the hills rose somewhat abruptly, and were covered for the most part with grass, broken by occasional sholahs.

A spot more pleasing to the eye of the sportsman I have seldom seen, and I stood looking round me in rapture.

"Well, Soonderapandi," I said, "if there isn't game here, I don't know where to look for it."

"There is game here," he replied. "Look, Dorai, look!"

I looked where he pointed, and, about half-way up the nearest slope, saw the heads of three hind sambur. They stood gazing at us for some time, and then, not altogether liking our appearance, moved slowly off, every now and then casting uneasy glances at us, till they got nearly out of sight, then they broke into a smart canter and disappeared.

I made up my mind that it would be best to give up all idea of shooting that afternoon, as there was plenty of work to be done in camp, and the hillmen would be all the better for a little rest. Moreover, it needed not Soonderapandi's assurance to tell me that there were fish worth taking in the river before me, so I put my rod together without loss of time. I set a coolie to work to dig for worms, and sent a couple of hillmen to collect crabs. In the meantime I reflected that I might well hope to impose upon the inexperience of the mahseer of this particular stream by offering them the tempting little spoons made by Mr. Luscombe, of Allahabad. I commenced operations at the deep pool below the shallows. Standing on a rock at the upper end of the pool, I cast down stream and hauled the spoon gently up. My first few casts were unsuccessful, but before long there was a shriek from my reel, my rod bent nearly double, and a mahseer was sailing down stream at his best pace.

The fish was not a large one—about nine pounds ; but, with the light rod and tackle I was using, he gave me plenty to do to keep him in hand ; but skill and experience triumphed over brute force, and he was eventually brought, flapping feebly, into a convenient shallow, and landed. I continued to have good sport, and by sunset had provided an excellent fish dinner for every one in camp.

The first glimmer of dawn saw us on the move, and by the time it was light enough to distinguish distant objects we had gained the top of the first hill. Fresh signs of sambur were apparent at almost every step, and no sooner had we begun to look round in earnest than we sighted game. On some distant cliffs the quick eye of one of the younger hillmen detected a herd of Neilgherry wild goats, among which I, with the assistance of my telescope, made out a patriarchal "saddle-back." We were just discussing the best way to get at these, when the horns and head of a magnificent stag sambur appeared out of some long grass in the ravine below us. He had evidently no suspicion of our presence, but was making his way slowly down towards a large sholah.

There was no time to be lost, and, as I was new to the ground, I decided to try a longish shot from where I was, rather than risk spoiling my chance by trying to get nearer. Waiting till an opening in the grass gave me a clear shot at his shoulder, I

fired, and had the satisfaction of seeing the stag roll over ; but he recovered himself immediately, and bounded through the grass and into the sholah. My second barrel, a snap shot, missed. The grass being unusually high and thick, it took us some time to get down to the point where he had disappeared, but when there we were gladdened by the sight of a profuse blood trail.

While we were following up the trail we heard some large animal crash away at a considerable distance ahead of us. This struck me at the time as somewhat strange as, if the stag were hard hit, he would in all probability allow us to get fairly close before rushing off in that way ; and an unwounded, or slightly-wounded animal, disturbed at such a distance, would have gone off more quietly.

The blood trail took us down to the very spot from which the sound had seemed to come, and there we found that the stag had lain down and had sprung up from his couch and gone off at full gallop. From all this we concluded that it was not we who had disturbed him. When we came to the open we heard the peculiar cry of wild dogs some little way ahead, and saw the stag labouring along through the grass, with every now and then a little red object appearing close to him.

I was about to follow at my best pace, when Soonderapandi stopped me, saying he knew the exact pool for which the stag was heading, and could take me to it by a short cut. We accordingly left the track of the stag and wild dogs and breasted the ridge in front of us. In my eagerness I got ahead, and, when about half-way up the hill, had to stop to recover my wind and give the others time to catch me up. While I was waiting, the hillmen paused to examine something on the ground. "What is it?" I called out. "A man's track in boots," they replied. "Well, come on," I said. I really couldn't waste precious time by going down to look at a track, which would probably have turned out to be my own. We soon got to the top of the ridge, and were at once rewarded by as wild and picturesque a sight as it has ever been my lot to behold.

In the valley below us rushed a wild mountain stream : at one point it made a sudden leap over a sheer precipice of one hundred feet, into a deep, dark pool. Near the edge of the pool, where the water was shallow, stood the stag at bay, wavelets lapping round his flanks. He had his back to the cascade, so that to

attack him from the rear, a wild dog would have to swim the seething waters at the foot of it. Six large wild dogs were on the level shingle at the margin of the pool, some lying down and some walking leisurely about, waiting, doubtless, till the stag should sink from exhaustion.

It was obvious that the game, so far as the poor stag was concerned, was played out. I therefore took plenty of time to consider what was to be done, and, getting out my glass, took a careful survey of the lie of the land. I saw that, in the immediate rear of the wild dogs, there was a ridge of broken ground and boulders, one high flat stone in particular overlooking the dogs. I thought if I could but gain the top of this unperceived, I could hardly fail to make an example of a couple of them before giving the wounded stag the *coup de grâce*.

I explained my plan to Soonderapandi ; he said, "As Dorai pleases, but he will never shoot those wild dogs." "I'll see about that," I said, and down we went. We kept out of sight without difficulty till we got to the broken ground before mentioned, and then began to make carefully for our point. The stream was making such a noise that there was but little fear of our being heard, and what little wind there was was favourable. At a point about fifty yards from the rock I was able to take a cautious peep at the scene ; there were the stag and dogs in much about the same position as I had last seen them. The last fifty yards were done with the utmost caution ; as I stepped on to the flat rock I cocked both hammers of my rifle, meaning to give the wild dogs a right and left before they could move. I stepped quickly forward—not a dog was to be seen ! but loud above the roar of the waterfall there broke the most fiendish peal of cackling laughter that ever it has been my lot to hear. At the same moment I caught sight of the huge figure of a man, standing up to his knees in the pool, alongside of the wounded stag !

I must admit that for the first moment or two I was quite staggered ; but a second glance showed me that my rival hunter was nothing more nor less than my own shadow on the waterfall. The stag showed his powers of discriminating between the shadow and the substance by making the best of his way out of the pool and down the glen ; but by this time I had pulled myself together, and an Express bullet that I had intended for a wild dog laid him low.

Not another glimpse of the wild dogs did I get. Of course, in a ravine such as I have described, the ground is necessarily very broken, but still it seems strange that six wild dogs should have disappeared so completely as these did. The stag, at any rate, was no phantom, which was a comfort ; there he lay in very substantial flesh, and with horns (43 inches) such as are seldom seen.

I sent one of the hillmen back to camp with the head, and told him to have the meat taken in. I, with the others, went on in search of further sport, and met with fair success, but not of sufficiently interesting a nature as to warrant a description of it.

I returned to camp soon after dark, very ready for the sumptuous repast my *chef* had thought fit to prepare for me. It began, I have cause to remember, with tinned lobster, passed through one or two fairly innocent courses to fried plum pudding, thence to what my boy calls "rum-kind" (ramaquin) toast, and finished up with sambur marrow bones. I felt very much inclined to turn in directly after dinner, but prudence prompted me to give such a repast time to settle. I therefore got one of my longest Trichy cheroots, wrapped myself up in my ulster, put down the back of my hammock-chair to the most comfortable angle, while my boy considerately placed a cup of *café noir* and a bottle of whiskey within easy reach, and replenished the wood fire that was burning a couple of yards from the door of the hut. Altogether I felt extremely comfortable and at peace with myself and the world.

I suppose I must have been in this blissful state for about twenty minutes when I was disturbed by the sudden appearance of my boy, with a scared, perplexed face. "One sahib done come to see master," he said. "A sahib ?" I exclaimed. "What sahib can there be here?" "Dunno, sar ; I didn't see this kind sahib before." At this point the sahib set all doubt on the subject at rest by pushing his way in past the boy, who promptly retired to the kitchen hut.

My visitor was one of the most extraordinary figures I ever beheld. To begin with his head : he wore a battered wide-awake hat set rather on one side ; his face was coarse-featured, but his bright eyes, determined mouth and general appearance of perfect health made him almost handsome. The hair of his head and beard were snow-white and flowed in an unbroken mass over his chest and shoulders. His height approached six

feet, his shoulders were broad, and he looked in condition to fight or run for his life, as occasion required. His clothes were a coarse shirt and trousers, about which I noticed nothing in particular. His feet were protected by stout boots.

The reader will have guessed by this time that my visitor was none other than the Dutchman of Soonderapandi's tale.

"Take a seat, sir," I said. "You will find a box by the door there."

"*Ich kann kein Englisch sprechen*," he said. I shook my head. "*Mais je parle un peu français*," he added. Again I shook my head. "*Ay-yo!*" he said in disgust. This gave me a clue. "*Malayalim sumsairapan areem*" ("I can speak Malayalim"), I said. His face lit up with delight; here was neutral ground, as he can have spoken little else for the last hundred-and-twenty years or so, while I had been pretty familiar with that language for a tenth part of that period.

"What can I do for you?" I began.

"You can do much for me," he replied, and then paused while his eye wandered round the hut, and finally rested on my cup of coffee. I handed it to him. "I've not touched it," I said. He took it eagerly, and sipped it slowly and longingly, as though he would not waste a drop; when he had got through about half he caught sight of the whiskey bottle. "May I have some of that?" he asked. "Certainly; help yourself." He did so, filling up his coffee cup with whiskey.

The generous fluid soon began to tell, and within an hour I had heard his story from himself; it tallied for the most part with Soonderapandi's tale. For me to tell him all he wanted to know about the world from which he had been so long cut off was a matter of impossibility, but I did my best, and the small hours of the morning found us still talking.

Every now and then the appearance of my visitor puzzled me greatly. At times I could hardly get over the idea that I was in conversation with my own shadow as I had seen it that morning against the waterfall; then a change would come, and the Dutchman in his substantial form was before me.

When we got on the subject of the improvement in fire-arms my visitor was intensely interested; so I got up and showed him my Express rifle, explained its action, and told him the distance at which one might reasonably expect to kill. He was delighted

when I showed him my cartridge bag and cartridges ; he put the bag on and kept slipping one or two in and out of the breach till he thoroughly understood the working.

"But," he remarked, "in this bag you have only some twenty cartridges. What will you do when these are finished ?"

"Oh," I said, "I have enough to last me a long time yet in that leather case by your elbow. And now," I continued, "I want to ask you a question. Where did you get those boots, in which I understand you have been tramping these hills for the last hundred-and-fifty years or so ?"

He gave me the name of a firm in Rotterdam, and I was making a careful note of it when I happened to look up, and saw my visitor with his fist clenched in the act of striking ! Instinctively I threw back my head, but his arm seemed to lengthen like a telescope and he caught me fairly between the eyes. Down I went like a ninepin, while a first-class pyrotechnic display illuminated the hut. I recovered myself just in time to see my friend rush off into the darkness with rifle, cartridge bag and leather case !

* * * * *

"Master please must go to bed ; it getting too much late," said my boy, as he shook me by the shoulder.

"Right you are, boy ; so I will." But before turning in, so vivid had been my dream, I couldn't help looking round to assure myself that my beloved rifle had not been carried off by the phantom Dutchman.

C. J. MALTEBY.

A Buried Sin.

CHAPTER XV.

A TRUE LOVER.

ARRIVED in Westbourne Street, Algernon was at once shown into a charmingly pretty little morning-room ; for even the stereotyped London house may be made attractive with a little artistic taste and trifling outlay, and Mrs. Watson had spared neither pains nor money in making her commonplace square be-back and be-front-roomed house into a cosy luxurious home ; with graceful draperies and artistically arranged ferns and flowers she improvised cosy nooks and corners where they were never intended to be ; by the skilful arrangement of fancy draperies and other elegant accessories which Liberty helps the tasteful housewife to get together, she transformed the square, uncompromising-looking landing-place into a dainty bower ; and by the skilful use of a mirror here, a plate-glass deception there, increased the size of the fairy nook tenfold, though with the drawback that the unwary might steer into a sheet of plate glass instead of the deluding conservatory whereon they had set their eyes.

The room into which Algernon was shown was an illustration of taste and prettiness in the way of a lady's boudoir. There were small gracefully-draped easy-chairs, a miniature lounge fit for a fairy lounger, an inlaid writing and work table to match, soft silken curtains looped across window and door, the fireplace full of ferns and grasses—everything arranged in a perfect harmony of colour most restful to the eye ; every tint was chosen in reference to its neighbour, every bit of drapery falling in seeming careless yet graceful and artistic folds. Out of this charming little apartment there opened a pear-shaped conservatory, filled for the most part with a splendid show of lilies—lilies pure and white, lilies crimson spotted, great tiger lilies glowing with orange-gold, against a background of rare ferns. A canary in a gilded cage hung among the foliage as in a garden of its own, and sang joyously till its little throat seemed likely to burst.

However, Algernon had scarcely time to take in the prettiness of these surroundings (indeed he was too anxious to see Claire even to look at them) when Claire entered the room, looking rather paler and graver than usual, as was quite natural under the circumstances. She had been counting the minutes to this meeting, but now that she and Algernon stood face to face, her heart failed her. What if he should *believe*? What if he should even doubt? That would add a drop of bitterness to the cup that was already full enough.

She had felt all along so sure of his perfect sympathy, and had longed to throw herself in his arms and tell him the whole sad story; yet now that he stood before her a chill crept over her; she dreaded lest the words she had to say should cloud the love-light in his eyes, and he should array himself, not against her, but against that dear father she loved so well. Of course she meant to say "Good-bye," to part herself from him; but would he be willing to let her go?

He advanced to her with outstretched hands, and, taking a lover's privilege, clasped her in a warm embrace and kissed her unreluctant lips most tenderly, mingling with his caress a few words of pleasure and surprise, recalling to her mind what for the moment she was in danger of forgetting.

"You did not expect to see me again so soon?" she said, disengaging herself and sitting down, he taking a seat by her side, hand still clasped in hand.

"No indeed," he said honestly; "but unexpected pleasures are always the greatest."

"And are you not surprised?"

"Never was more so," he answered; "but what does it all mean, my darling? It is delightful to have you here, to feel that I have got you safe for this hour at least; but I want to know what is beyond it. Tell me why you are here, and what is this about going to America?"

Feeling overcome with nervousness, she half hid her face on his shoulder, as she told him as briefly as she could the story of their family skeleton, dwelling on the mystery that enveloped the case, and her confidence in her father's protestation of his innocence. Half breathless, with parted lips and heart that beat as if it would choke her, she waited to feel his hand slacken its hold on hers, to hear some commonplace words of comfort,

such as he would give to a stranger's sorrow, expecting to *feel* the rose of love wither beneath the hot breath of a new-born shame. For a moment he was silent, a moment that seemed an age to her. What was he thinking? What was he going to say? She felt his clasp—not relax—grow closer; his head bent down, and his warm lips were pressed upon hers in a long and tender kiss.

"My darling!" he exclaimed at last. "My poor little love—and you have had to bear all this cruel revelation alone?"

"Yes, alone," she answered; and a sob climbed into her throat and broke in little murmurs from her lips.

"Now that *I* know it will all be different," he rejoined. "My darling, you must not take this journey on Wednesday, you must wait; a few days or weeks can make no difference. No, don't speak yet. A licence is easily got—marry me at once, and we will go together and bring this much-wronged father home."

She gave one cry of such unutterable joy as seldom falls from mortal lips, and lifted her now radiant eyes to his.

"Thank God, thank God!" she exclaimed; "then *you* don't believe anything——"

"Yes, I do," he said, interrupting her quickly. "I believe something, and that thing is, that your father was made a tool, and that rascally Jew is at the bottom of it all! I took a dislike to him from the moment I set eyes on him. You remember I refused to be introduced to him at my brother's the other day. I am not given to sudden fancies, but I felt a repugnance towards that man. Never fear, darling; we two will work together and soon set things right. Of course I would rather have waited to make your father's acquaintance, and got his consent in the orthodox manner; but exceptional cases require exceptional treatment, so we must do without it."

His words gladdened her heart to the core. So he was eager to take her in spite of the taint upon her name—and her being her father's daughter—the daughter of a convicted felon. Her heart swelled till it seemed brimming over with happy grateful love. He spoke so calmly too, as though it was the most commonplace course he was proposing. She felt so overwrought, she dared not look in his face, nor trust herself to pour her feelings out in words; she would break down so utterly; only

her hands crept closer round his neck, and her head bowed lower on his breast.

"No, no, Algy dear," she said in a low suppressed voice, "we mustn't think of that any more; we can never be to one another what we once hoped we should be."

"And pray why not?"

"Because—Ah—because you know I cannot bring this disgrace upon you—and—"

"I am the best judge of that," he said, interrupting her quickly. "I don't see why *you* should feel disgrace where *I* see none. No, Claire; no more of that kind of talk—there is more reason now that we two should belong to each other than there was before."

"It makes me happy, so very happy, to hear you think and talk so," she exclaimed, her voice broken with emotion, and she nestled closer to him as though her home verily was in his arms. "I think it would have broken my heart if you had been ready to throw me over because—well, because things are as they are with poor papa! Of course I know it must be so; we've got to say good-bye and part; that is why I sent for you—but I am glad you should be sorry as well as I."

"I don't think there is much chance of our saying good-bye to one another. Look here, Claire, you mustn't indulge in any romantic, foolish, high-flying notions! In a novel, 'Her Father's Sin,' in big letters, might be allowed to part true lovers; but *we* live a real life in a real world. As I said before, I believe your father is sinned against, not sinning, and it will be for us to prove it; as I am sure we shall; but even if he were ten times guilty, you would have ten times more claim upon my love—and, thank God, I have enough to pay it! Love like ours—for you do love me, Claire; at least, I believe you do—is not killed, but increased by adverse circumstances—so please God, darling, no good-bye."

"It is you who are romantic now," she said, lifting her eyes to his with fond affection. "You take a narrow view of things, with your own honest eyes and honest heart. The world will not do that. You have a career before you, and as matters stand now I should only be a hindrance and a clog upon you. We can't live for ourselves alone, however we think or feel; while we live in the world we must guide our lives in reference to the world's opinion—and it would say—ah! don't make me use the ugly

words ! Oh, it is no use talking ; words won't alter facts, and however generous and self-sacrificing you may be, I will not let you suffer for my sake."

"I wish you were a little less cool and matter-of-fact, my Claire," he said with a touch of bitterness. "I thought that when a woman loved a man she was ready to give up all the world for his sake."

"And I *do* love you—you know I do," she exclaimed with a sudden burst of emotion. "I am willing to give up everything but my dear father's name, or my scheme for its redemption."

"I do not wish you in any way to give up your intention," he answered ; "I think it is right you should take up your father's cause ; indeed it is your duty to do so. I only wish to share the responsibility with you, and bear my share of the trouble."

"You would have the bitterest part to bear, and you don't know how bitter it would be," she answered. "You must go your way, Algy, and I must go mine. It is only my love for you that gives me strength to say good-bye ; and, Algy, when my dear father is cleared and proved martyr instead of criminal, *then*, unless you change, as men sometimes do, we can talk over our plans again. Till then we must drift—you must let me go."

"No good captain deserts his vessel in a storm, yet you expect me to abandon my sweet little loving craft and leave her in the midst of troubled waters alone? I can't and I won't do it, my Claire ; it is too much to ask any man to turn into such a sneak and coward?"

"I shall not be alone ; Mr. Watson is going with me."

"Mr. Watson will be an admirable guardian, no doubt, but he isn't *me*." He brought forward many persuasive arguments in order to gain his point. He desired to accompany her upon the voyage as her legitimate protector ; he must become so sooner or later—that had been already settled—then why not now? He brought forward specious reasons to prove that fate had plainly taken things out of their hands and pointed the way they ought to go. It could all be so easily and satisfactorily arranged too ; he would be able to settle his business affairs, and set matters in train so that no important matter should suffer during his absence for a few brief weeks ; a special licence could be obtained, if necessary, in the course of a few hours, and they could be married and start on a novel kind of honeymoon, sanctified, even if

perhaps saddened, by its combination with a sacred duty. But Claire's feet were firmly set one way, and not even the tender pleading of her own loving loyal heart could tempt her to swerve an iota from the path she had marked out for herself from the first hearing of her father's sad history.

Algernon went over the same urgings, the same ground again and again, and had to yield his will at last. It cost Claire something to stand against his affectionate endeavours—but she was obstinate as the gentlest of women will be when she has set her heart upon a certain line of duty. “She was her father's only child,” she argued, “a part of himself, a part of his life; it was her right to be with him, and the presence of a stranger, however near and dear to *her*, would be an embarrassment to *him*. Besides she would not burden Algernon with her trouble, drag him from his career, hang the millstone of all their family responsibilities round his neck.”

Her spirit was stirred to its inmost depths by the persistence and strength of her lover's affection, which would neither bend nor break under the strain put upon it. If he had swerved even a hair's breadth from his allegiance or shrank for a moment from contact with her unhappy surroundings, her sensitive spirit would have known it; no tender words—mere words—of sympathy or regret would have hidden the fact; the least lukewarmness in any way would have struck a chill to her heart—but her unfortunate position had only made him cling the closer to her! Failure in *him*, in his affections, at this trying crisis would have embittered her against all mankind for ever afterwards. The shattering of one's faith in human sympathy and human love at the outset of life clouds it to its close, and for a time fills it with the bitterness of death, but this trial was spared to Claire. *He* was true and loyal to the core.

Before they parted that evening they had come to a sort of mutual understanding, each crossing the other in the most amicable manner; Algernon insisting that he was an engaged man, Claire holding that they were *both* free—at present. Whether either would avail themselves of the freedom so generously accorded, time would show. Whenever he could snatch a moment during his business hours, Algernon dashed up to Westbourne Street, and was not often successful in finding Claire at home; he thought himself lucky if he caught a few

passing words or a glimpse of her ; but for one hour more at least he had her to himself.

On the Sunday—when the world's whirl is for the moment stilled, the busy hands of labour are at rest, and the very atmosphere seems quieter than on the working days, as though the invisible multitudes too were enjoying their day of rest—the lovers went to the morning service in Westminster Abbey together. It was the first time they had so joined in the church service ; and the solemn grandeur and architectural beauty of the grand historic old abbey, familiar though every feature of aisle and altar was to their eyes, never struck them with such an awe-inspiring sense as on this day. The thunder of the organ rolling in waves of undulating sound, wandering like an army of melodious ghosts among the monuments of the dead, stirred their souls and filled their minds with a strange music, and the impressive solemnity of the service seemed to bring to them a special message of faith, hope and comfort.

They walked home through the park, slowly sauntering under the cool green shade of the trees, clothed now in all the richness of their summer luxuriance ; it was so quiet, so peaceful, this green oasis in the heart of a surging city ! They chose the more secluded paths, where they had it all to themselves, an Eden of their very own. Only a solitary pedestrian now and again crossed their path. The singing birds and the shining sun, the harmonizing greens of turf and tree, the azure sky, and the shafts of golden light dancing and flickering on the leaves—all this they felt and enjoyed as they went their way homeward. It seemed that the birds sang and the sun shone for them. How full, how much fuller than they had ever dreamed, of poetry and beauty was this grimy old city of London ! Algy was prosaic enough in a general way ; but on this occasion he was as romantically inclined as Claire, and *he* whispered a wish, a ridiculous impossible-to-be-fulfilled wish, "that this delightful morning would last for ever." Fortunately our wishes are not self-fulfilling, or we should suffer as much chagrin as did the old woman when the sausage flew and fastened itself to her nose. This was, however, a red-letter day in their lives, to be marked with a white stone, and turned to with refreshing memories in the by-and-bye.

On the Monday morning came Mrs. Blaine and Dorothy, and

for the brief time that intervened before Claire's departure the trio of ladies were never apart ; their kind hostess with great consideration effaced herself as much as possible from the family party. *He* and *she* had no more opportunities for a private interview ; they might exchange a word on the staircase or in the passages, but nowhere else had they a chance.

In order to avoid spending the night in Liverpool, it was decided that the travelling party should start at five o'clock in the morning. Algernon had hoped to be able to accompany them to Liverpool ; but at the eleventh hour an important business engagement prevented his doing so. However, in the grey dawn of the early morning he was at the station waiting to see them off. During the few minutes' waiting, they walked up and down the platform, while the rest of the party were choosing a compartment and looking after the luggage. When they parted it was in mutual hope and confidence. However circumstances might turn out, they were happy in one thing, in perfect faith one in the other, and pure and perfect love.

He saw her and her friends into the carriage, and lingered at the door till the bell rang and the guard came along slamming the doors, and the train began to move slowly out of the station. The last words were spoken.

"Dear one," he said, "tell your father, while he has his daughter *there*, not to forget that he has a son waiting for him *here!*" adding, as he lowered his voice for her ears only, "and remember I love you *now* a hundredfold better than I loved you at the first."

CHAPTER XVI.

OVER SEA AND LAND.

THEY sailed from Liverpool in the "City of Rome," one of the finest and fastest of the ocean steamers ; a floating palace it is, whereon the discomforts of a voyage, which cannot be entirely overcome, are minimized and reduced to the slightest possible degree. Plenty of amusements are provided for those who can amuse themselves, and comfortable homelike cabins for those who cannot. A kind of *bon-camaraderie* is soon established on board an ocean steamer ; people don't stop to ask "Who's who?" or wait for the formality of an introduction.

For a certain number of days the community was thrown in upon its own resources, and one and all of its members united to do their best to enliven the monotony of the voyage, and succeeded. Everybody was sociably inclined, and a general exchange of smiles and civilities was always in full flow.

The weather was fine and calm ; the vessel glided, scarcely seeming to move, over the world of palpitating waters. Those masculine spirits who delighted in the stormy element, rebelled at this unnatural state of things ; there was something wrong somewhere ; no Atlantic waves had any business to sink into such a state of unruffled calm ; even the rolling forties, from which some show of spirit was expected, forgot to do their duty, and absolutely let the vessel ride over them without a protesting blow ! With a brisk breeze following in their wake and the briny kisses of the "great sweet mother" on their faces, they scudded along at the rate of eighteen knots an hour.

Claire, who had somewhat dreaded the voyage, revelled in the perfect calm ; her spirits recovered their old elasticity ; she was on deck from morning till night, talking and exchanging harmless confidences with her fellow-passengers, and watching the games of shovel-board and ring-toss, with which the young men tried to beguile the time. When they tired of that they improvised a walking match, or ran half-mile races round the deck, and so in one way or another scared away *ennui* and made the time pass pleasantly ; for when the first novelty is over, skies of changeless blue above, and smooth blue summer seas below, are apt to grow monotonous, and a thunderstorm or howling hurricane, "warranted harmless," would create a welcome change.

One morning, on the fourth day out, Mr. Watson came to her rather excited—no—not excited, the legal mind never allowed itself that indulgence—but beaming as though he had got something to tell and was in a hurry to tell it.

"Claire, my dear child," he said, "I've got a bit of news for you. Strange, isn't it, to pick up news on an Atlantic steamer ? I've been in the smoking-room for the last hour, you know, having a little friendly talk. Well, in the course of conversation I happened to mention Ophir City, and made some inquiries about it. I said we were going to a place close by it, called Rattlesnake Camp, and a man looked up from a game he was playing on the other side of the table, and said, 'I can tell you all about Rattle-

snake Camp ; I've got my diggings there ; I only left it three months ago, and I'm going back now.' Then one thing brought up another, and it turns out that he knows your father ! not by his rightful name, of course, but as Henry Thurston, the name he took when he dropped his own."

"Knows my dear father ! does he ?" exclaimed Claire. "Oh, do bring him to me ! I shall like to talk to him and get him to tell me everything he knows. Which of the passengers is he ?"

"Why, strange to say, it is that picturesque-looking man in the frontier get-up and big hat, who was walking with you for an hour last night."

"Ah ! there he is, coming this way," she said, getting up from her seat and going towards him—Mr. Watson beside her. They met with a recognizing smile ; her hand went out and her heart opened to this man with the bronzed face and hollow cheeks. Last night he had been a mere animated walking stick ; to-day he was the absorbing interest of the voyage. With tremulous voice and misty eyes she said :

"Mr. Watson tells me that you know my father. Please tell me something, anything, about him. I haven't seen him since I was quite a little child."

"Likely he'll be at the landing stage, New York, to meet you," he rejoined, looking with undisguised admiration at the flushed eager face.

"He doesn't expect us at all," replied Claire ; "we mean to take him by surprise !"

"You'll do that in more ways than one, I should think," replied he, who had registered himself in the passenger list as Richard Gough. Disregarding the implied compliment, she rejoined :

"And was he well—and—and happy, when you saw him last ?" She hardly knew what questions to ask of a stranger, beyond mere common-places touching his general well-being, yet she felt there was so much to *know*, so much to say, if Mr. Gough would only say it ; the most trivial anecdote, the lifting an eyelid, the uttering of a word, a sentiment in the course of daily life. "Your father used to do this," or used to say that, would have been of the deepest interest to her. She wanted him to volunteer scraps of information, to talk of him, and nothing else ; but she did not know how to make him do it. A more experienced woman of

the world would have found the way easy enough ; but he was rather taciturn and silent, as men are apt to be who are much alone or who live in a mixed masculine community, when they are obliged to walk warily. He made but a second's pause, then answered her question with some deliberation.

"Why, yes ; I guess he was well enough—we're a pretty tough lot out there—and about being happy, we don't confidentialize upon that subject overmuch ; but I fancy we're as happy as hard work, hard drinking, hard swearing, and occasional broken heads can make us." Seeing the sudden change that came over her face, the look of horror and dismay, he added quickly : "But don't be afraid ; I speak in a general way ; *he* isn't one of that sort ; he don't drink, he don't swear, much—every man must do a little that way or he'd be charged for a ninny—and he works hard, and he's always ready with a helping hand for any that wants it. The whole camp looks up to him. If anything goes wrong, why, he's all there, true grit all round, and his word is held as good as an act of parliament ; there, if I was to talk for a week I couldn't say more than that."

"Dear papa, I'm glad he's so popular and just and true," said Claire with a happy little sigh and a smile upon her lips. "Should you think I was his daughter ? Am I like him at all ?"

"Well," answered Mr. Gough, regarding her critically, "if you wasn't so much like yourself, you might be a little more like him. That is to say, if you had brown eyes instead of blue, and instead of catching the golden sunlight in your hair, if it was powdered with pepper and salt, and you were a little more hollow-eyed and grave-looking, there might be, so to speak, a sort of a likeness."

"Now, you've given me papa's portrait without meaning it," exclaimed Claire. "And when we land at New York, if we start the same day, how long will it be before we reach papa's place?" Mr. Gough stroked his beard reflectively for a moment, then answered cautiously :

"I don't know as I'd advise you to go straight there ; it might be a little inconvenient, you know."

"Why is there any need of preparation ?" exclaimed Claire. "Don't you think he'd be glad to see us ?"

"Glad !" exclaimed Mr. Gough. "I should think he'd burst

himself with joy at the sight of your bonnie face—and you his own child too! but it isn't that I'm thinking of. You see things are very rough up there, as they are likely to be where there's no women to speak of, and everything's left in a man's own hands."

"But there must be somebody to clean and work and cook and wash and keep things tidy," exclaimed Claire, to whom the idea of everything being left in a man's hands was rather bewildering, and conjured a curious household picture before her mind's eye.

"Bless your innocent heart," he exclaimed, "every man's his own cook, and if he wants things kep' clean and tidy, he must keep 'em himself. Your father's got the best cabin on the place, and he keeps it as bright and clean as though every day was Sunday; but you see there's no accommodation at all for a dainty ladybird like you."

"But is there no hotel where one could put up and find decent accommodation for a day or two?" inquired Mr. Watson, who had got to an age when comforts were necessary, and luxuries desirable, and to whom the picture presented by Mr. Gough's communication was anything but encouraging. If he had reflected he might have known that a mining-camp in the Far West would not be a palace of ease for a luxurious gentleman or dainty lady, but he had not turned his thoughts that way; he had gained all the information he could, and concentrated his ideas upon the comfort of the journey both by land and sea, and so far had not been disappointed—beyond that, his imagination led him not. Now that he was brought face to face with a little difficulty it startled him, though he was more anxious for Claire's sake than for his own. At his last question Mr. Gough shook his head.

"There's nothing but 'bars,'" he answered, "and people do nothing but drink and play cards there. If a stranger comes among us, we give him a shake-down somewhere, and I'm sure there isn't one of us but would turn out and sleep on the bare ground, and glad to do it, to accommodate Hal Thurston's daughter; only we've none of us got a place fit for you to put your pretty foot in. I'd advise you to put up in Ophir City; there's a sort of hotel there, and a decent woman to look after the young lady. You'd better send for him to meet you there."

"No," exclaimed Claire decidedly, "I shall go straight to where papa lives—you can get there; and why can't I?"

"I don't say but what you can," he answered; "only it's a mighty rough stony way for a lady; there's no regular road, and you have to go for nearly four miles down a steep stony zigzag path down the mountain side and through the pine forests, with only a narrow mule track all the way——"

"Well," interrupted Claire, "let me only get on a mule's back, and I shall not mind anything about rough paths and stony ways, if I can only get to the end of them; and I'm sure you'll pilot the way?"

He professed his willingness to go to the end of the world or beyond it in the present company.

From that time, the ice being once broken, they became great friends. Thenceforth Claire had a willing slave, ready to fetch, carry, and anticipate her slightest wishes, in Mr. Gough; he followed in her footsteps like a faithful dog; and like a faithful dog was grateful; indeed he watched for a word or smile from the lovely lady who had come into his life like a revelation of beautiful and perfect womanhood. He was a fine stalwart fellow, broad-shouldered, with the free swinging step of one accustomed to the wilds; he would have been fair, but for his many years' bronzing beneath the sun, for his hair was a bright auburn, with just a suspicion of red in it. He was in reality not more than thirty, but looked quite ten years older. He proved a most amusing companion, though he had "queer ways," as Claire said; he was a type of man that had never crossed her path before, and the novelty interested and attracted her. He was full of varied information too on subjects that to her were strange and new, and told racy anecdotes of camp life, and though she laughed at his quaint and forcible phraseology, he did not mind it in the least; indeed, he rather liked to feel that *he* was the cause of the low rippling current of laughter that fell from her lips. They gathered from his general conversation that "Heny Thurston" had been fortunate with his claim, and was rapidly making his "pile." "*He* had been very lucky himself," he said; "had made his pile, and been to Europe and spent it, and was now going back to begin again." This kind of information had little interest for Claire; she did not care about her father's fortune in the west; all her thoughts took him homeward,

to be reinstated in his position there—his “pile” might “perish where it grew.” She had laid out her plan of campaign and never swerved from it by a hair’s breadth.

They reached New York in the evening, and so were compelled to pass the night there. The next morning they started on the overland journey, so rich in its varied scenes of novelty and picturesqueness. Life on the cars, and the scraps and sketches of human interest they caught by the way—every trifling incident was of the deepest interest to Claire; indeed, from the time she left the shores of England her life had seemed to her like a vivid dream long drawn out. The rapid travelling, the constant flashing from one scene to another, kept her in a constant state of excitement; she could not settle her mind on any one thing, for reflected therein as on a looking-glass were a host of kaleidoscopic scenes, one crowding upon the other so fast that nothing seemed distinct. The old quiet days at The Friars seemed already to have faded into a shadowy “long ago.” She had room in her mind for only one perfect picture—and that was her father, and he grew into a more perfect personality as the days went on.

Arriving at Grass Valley Station, after some six days of railway travelling, they started in covered waggons for Ophir City. Their way lay through one of the most beautiful regions of California, where nature seemed to have gathered some of her grandest works together, just to show her wandering children from far-off cities what she could do in these magnificent solitudes, subtly working through the silent ages, throwing up huge battlements of mountains, crowning some with eternal snow, and clothing others with forests of dark pines, letting loose the waters and throwing the unspeakable magic of her spell everywhere, with the marvellous effects which rouse men’s awe and wonder.

The grandeur of the scenery and the exquisitely harmonious colouring that tinted the earth, air and skies roused the enthusiasm of the travellers, who could but utter exclamations of awe and wonder, for no words can convey the impression such scenes make upon the beholder, and not even the most vivid word painting could give an idea of it to the mind’s eye. The clearness of the atmosphere made the most distant features seem quite near, so that they really had no idea of the vast extents

they were passing through. The railway journey had seemed wonderful enough, but this slow travelling was more enjoyable still, as it brought them nearer to the picturesque and beautiful.

They wound by a narrow zigzag path down the mountain side till they came to a spur of land, or rather a rocky *butte*, scarred and seamed like the dilapidated walls of some ruined castle. Here the waggon stopped to rest the horses and give their scanty load of passengers time to enjoy the magnificent view. Magnificent indeed it was! a vast stretch of rugged mountain heights reaching away as far as the eye could see, their sides clothed with the sombre green of the great pine forests, dimpled here and there with lighter patches of verdure, their untrodden summits standing bare and bold against the vivid blue sky. Here and there a shining stream, looking like a silver thread in the distance, crept down the mountain side, gathering strength and speed by the way, till it swelled into a roaring torrent rushing through the valley, tearing up and carrying with it green trophies as it hurried to join the river many miles away. A very sea of sombre firs surged below them like black plumed warriors swaying upon the battle-field. There were deep rifts in the mountain sides, widening into dark cañons, or cut and broken into rugged gorges, black with the dense shadows of the dark woods.

For the greater part of two days they were passing through such scenery as this. In the early afternoon of the second day Mr. Gough exclaimed, pointing westward :

"There is Ophir City yonder ; if you look you can see the thin lines of blue smoke curling skyward. The camp is about three miles farther on. This ramshackle trap goes no farther on than the city. Perhaps we had better rest there and push on to the camp to-morrow."

"No, no," exclaimed Claire eagerly ; "if it is possible, please let us push on to night ! I can't rest now till I have seen papa."

"Well," he answered, "it is just possible we might get there before nightfall if we hurry up ; but there will be no getting back to Ophir City till to-morrow."

"Never mind about getting back, only let us get there," said Claire impatiently. Mr. Watson let the girl have her way in all things, and Mr. Gough was only too ready to carry out any desire of hers, even had it been of the wildest. Accordingly

they did "hurry up," reaching the city in about half-an-hour's time, there got mules with all possible speed, and started for Rattlesnake Camp. Claire looked very pale and was very silent now, too much shut within herself to pay any attention to the romantic scenes they were passing through. Presently they came within sight of the camp, as it lay in the crimson light of the slow-setting sun. The miners had left off work for that day; some were bathing their hands and faces in the running stream, others passing to and fro clearing for the night, the refrains of some of the songs they were singing rolling in echoes through the evening air.

The stir and sounds of busy human life were pleasant to hear and see.

"As soon as we round that point," said Mr. Gough, "Hal Thurston's cabin will be in sight."

Claire's heart was too full for her to speak now of what lay nearest to it; she only said :

"We should never have found our way here but for your help. How lucky it was we met with you! I feel as though we could never thank you enough for all the time you've wasted on us!"

"Don't try," he answered tersely. "Time only began with me on board that 'City of Rome.' I feel as though I'd struck my streak of real luck there."

They dismounted from their mules, and walked in single file through a narrow stony path amid a tangle of brushwood and undergrowth till they reached the cabin; they found it empty. A large retriever lay on guard across the threshold; he evidently knew Mr. Gough, for he got up, shook himself lazily, and came forward to give him greeting.

"Your father's dog," said Mr. Gough with an explanatory nod, "and he's as sensible as a Christian," he added, laying his hand on the big curly head. "If he takes to a man, respect him; if he's suspicious and refuses to make friends, distrust that man, there's something wrong about him. Well, Oscar, old boy, where's your master?" The dog wagged his tail in a slow majestic kind of way, and turned his black nose towards the camp.

"Dowh there, is he? Well, now, come speak to the lady."

Oscar looked at her with his soft brown eyes, then walked slowly round her with short inquiring sniffs, as though to make

quite sure that her moral qualities were such as to deserve his recognition. Apparently satisfied, he gave a short yap, and laid his big paw in her hand unasked. Her arm was round his neck and she was kneeling by his side in a moment.

"Oh, you dear delightful doggie ! papa's own Oscar," and she overwhelmed him with her caresses. He laid his curly head against her face and gave a series of rumbling growls.

"That's the greatest compliment he can pay you," exclaimed the delighted Mr. Gough. "He's talking ! and he never does that unless he's head-over-ears gone on anybody. Now you watch; when your pa's coming he'll hear him long before he comes in sight, and run off to meet him." Oscar was up in a minute all on the alert, his ears well back, his eyes turned with a watchful eager look towards the foothills. His tail began to wag slowly, then with a joyful bark he bounded away, and was out of sight in a minute.

"I do believe he knew what you were saying," exclaimed Claire with admiring surprise.

"Of course he does ; he knows everything a dog ought to know, and more—and what he don't know isn't worth knowing. Fond of dogs, sir ?" he added, addressing Mr. Watson. Leaving them to discuss canine or any other matters they pleased, Claire went into the cabin—her father's home ! the dear father who was a dream and a mystery to her ! How she had longed and looked forward to this minute—the minute that was coming so close now—and would bring them face to face. How often she had imagined this first meeting, but how different the reality promised to be ! Mr. Watson and Mr. Gough were talking outside, and their voices troubled her ; she wanted to be alone and not to meet him for the first time under the eyes of strangers.

She looked round her ; the cabin was scantily furnished, with the merest necessities of masculine life ; everything was orderly and scrupulously clean, but it looked cold and cheerless in the fading light. Wood was at hand ; Claire threw off her hat and initiated herself into the mysteries of fire kindling, and as the flames crackled and leapt up they cast a pleasant glow around, lighting the desolation with a cheerful welcoming blaze. She heard Oscar barking in the distance, and knew *he* was coming home, at last—at last. She was stirred by deep emotion, but not agitated at all—a little faint and giddy perhaps, nothing more,